Jerome’s Women

Creating Identity and Fashioning Scholars

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School of Humanities

Classics and Ancient History

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Preface

Jerome’s writings first came to my attention as an undergraduate. I was attracted by the vividness of his writing but puzzled that the female recipients of his correspondence tolerated such a vain, irascible and misogynistic mentor.

I took my initial, tentative thesis to Dr Neil O’Sullivan, Discipline Chair of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Western Australia and Dr Michael Champion who listened patiently and encouraged me to persevere with a doctoral thesis. I am grateful to both men for their advice and suggestions in shaping this work. Dr O’Sullivan’s command of the classics pointed me in new and interesting directions. Dr Champion was extremely forbearing in listening to every new idea, commenting helpfully on successive drafts and making mentoring sessions enjoyable.

I would also like to acknowledge the loving support of my husband, Tony, and our four adult children who have encouraged me and accepted my preoccupation without reproach.

The translations in the thesis are my own, except where otherwise acknowledged. Translations of certain commentators have been included as reference points to my own and I have indicated where my interpretations differ from theirs. The standard unpunctuated Vulgate is among the texts that I regard as significant.
Abstract

This thesis studies the creation of identities and the role women play in Jerome’s socio-political, scholarly and eschatologically-oriented theology for Rome. It extends understanding of Jerome’s self-representation. Women gain new forms of agency while retaining traditional patronage powers.

Chapter 1 contextualises the argument in modern scholarship, both critiquing and drawing on feminist and poststructuralist readings. Chapter 2 tests the utility of Carlon’s taxonomy of women by comparing Jerome’s letters to Pliny’s. Chapters 3–6 map Jerome’s construction of virgins, wives and matrons, identifying ways women exercise agency and shape Jerome’s discourse. Chapter 7 concludes the study and points to potential further research.
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# Abbreviations

## Scriptural Abbreviations

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<td>Gen</td>
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<td>Col</td>
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<td>Deut</td>
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<td>Eph</td>
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<td>Ex</td>
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<td>Heb</td>
<td>Epistle to the Hebrews</td>
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<td>Hos</td>
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<td>Jer</td>
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<td>Lk</td>
<td>Gospel of Luke</td>
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<td>Mt</td>
<td>Gospel of Matthew</td>
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<td>2 Pet</td>
<td>Second Epistle of Peter</td>
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<td>Phil</td>
<td>Epistle to the Philippians</td>
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<td>1 Sam</td>
<td>Samuel</td>
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<td>1 Tim</td>
<td>First Epistle to Timothy</td>
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<td>1 Thess</td>
<td>First Epistle to the Thessalonians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev</td>
<td>The Revelation to St John</td>
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<td>Rom</td>
<td>Epistle to the Romans</td>
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## Primary Text Abbreviations

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<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCS</td>
<td>Die griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
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<td>PG</td>
<td>Patrologia Graeca</td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologia Latina</td>
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<td><strong>AEHE V</strong></td>
<td>Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études, Vᵉ sec., sciences religieuses</td>
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<td><strong>AHR</strong></td>
<td>American Historical Review</td>
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<td><strong>AJA</strong></td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology</td>
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<td><strong>AJP</strong></td>
<td>American Journal of Philology</td>
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<td><strong>ATR</strong></td>
<td>Anglican Theological Review</td>
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<td><strong>BJPsych</strong></td>
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<td>BCE</td>
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<td>CUP</td>
<td>Cambridge University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESC</td>
<td>Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations</td>
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<td>G&amp;H</td>
<td>Gender &amp; History</td>
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<tr>
<td>G&amp;R</td>
<td>Greece &amp; Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTHR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>His</td>
<td>History: The Journal of the Historical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUP</td>
<td>Harvard University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILS</td>
<td>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAAR</td>
<td>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>JECS</td>
<td>Journal of Early Christian Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JLARC</td>
<td>Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Archaeology</td>
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<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JThS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>Oxford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUP</td>
<td>Princeton University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAC</td>
<td>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</td>
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<tr>
<td>REA</td>
<td>Revue des études anciennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REAug.</td>
<td>Revue des études augustiniennes</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>Revue des études latines</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSR</td>
<td>Revue des sciences religieuses</td>
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<tr>
<td>RThPh</td>
<td>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSEC</td>
<td>Society for the Study of Early Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>StudPatr</td>
<td>Studia Patristica</td>
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<tr>
<td>VChr.</td>
<td>Vigiliae Christianae</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZKG</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</td>
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Chapter 1: ‘This Turbulent Priest’

The letters of Jerome (Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus) of Stridon (347–420), written between 370 and 419 CE reflect the volatile life of this devout, but contentious scholar. They illustrate his capacity to reinterpret the events of his life, projecting the image of himself he wished to be seen in his own time and remembered for posterity. Jerome lived through times of famine and fiscal uncertainty, which had been brought about by rebellions in Rome itself and in the provinces.\(^1\) The borders of the Empire proved porous with the threat of barbarian invasion from the Vandals and the Huns. In 410, the Visigoths, under Alaric, entered Rome. Christian influence was growing after Constantine’s assumption of control of the Empire in 323 and the cessation of persecution. However, the Church witnessed fierce disputes over Christological issues concerning the nature of both Jesus’ divinity and humanity, notably in the often-violent Arian controversy and its that persisted between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381). Despite these conflicts, a ‘Nicene orthodoxy’ emerged. The election of Jerome’s patron Damasus, as Bishop of Rome, was also accompanied by bloodshed.\(^2\)

**A Letter at the Cross Road**

In 385, Jerome wrote to a middle-aged, dedicated virgin of notable piety and lineage, as he was about to set sail for the Holy Land.\(^3\) The letter comprises a defence against accusations that he seduced Paula and was guilty of financial chicanery. In it, he reasserts his scholarly and ascetic authority. Exegesis of this letter foreshadows issues pertinent to this thesis, and demonstrates how Jerome used letters to women to promote an identity as a holy, orthodox mentor of rigorous, Eastern asceticism, an heir to St Paul’s apostolic authority, and scholar *extraordinaire*. This letter also reveals what

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\(^2\) Ibid.

prompted Jerome’s reinterpretation of himself from celebrity scholar-monk in Rome to the venerable quasi-bishop, labouring over the Scriptures in the Holy Land.

The letter introduces Jerome’s most significant patrons. Patronage is a key issue in this thesis and the letter reveals how women, by virtue of their rank and ability, have the power to shape his future and the way he writes. The examination of Jerome’s relationship with his female circle has proved a fruitful area for feminist scholarship. Barbara Feichtinger’s study served as a corrective to the disapprobation of Jerome’s attitude to women by arguing that Jerome’s ascetic agenda liberated, rather than oppressed, them. In similar vein, Silvia Letsch-Brunner provides a comprehensive reconstruction of the life of Marcella where, especially in the second section of the book, Marcella is represented as a scholar in her own right rather than merely a disciple. Once again Jerome’s reputation for misogyny is tempered. However, as in the work of Feichtinger, an examination of Jerome’s ‘writing women’ to create an identity and reputation is rarely touched on, though the hagiographic nature of Letter 127 is well deconstructed. This thesis will attempt to show that the social institution of patronage provided scope for female agency despite the conventions of rhetorical construction’, not only for Marcella, but for other femina clarissima. Patrick Laurence identifies the creation of a ‘nouveau modèle feminin’, seeking to follow ‘la vie parfaite’. Jerome does not use the term vie parfaite, but rather, the ‘angelic life’ where he introduces a new social order for Rome in preparation for heaven. However, Laurence provides a helpful corrective to Jerome’s exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7, suggesting that Jerome has misunderstood Paul’s intention concerning marriage and virginity.

Jerome’s letter to Asella demonstrates his rhetorical giftedness not only in terms of his self-promotion but also in negotiating the social gulf between himself and the women, seeking a new definition of how men and women may relate. His employment of rhetoric presents the women as elite in godliness and learning, creating for them a present and future reputation as heroic Christians and thus re-interpreting the old socio-political certainties of Rome, which focused on the male members of the clan. Christa

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4 Barbara Feichtinger, *Apostolae apostolorum: Fraueniskose als Befreiung und Zwang bei Hieronymus.* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 1995), 114ff.
6 Ibid., 17–23. I will seek to account for the coolness in tone in the correspondence from Bethlehem, as representing a change in the relationship; see 221ff. below.
8 Ibid., 226.
Krumeich’s clear prosopological study of these educated women and her thesis that Rome’s socio-political ideals were appropriated and transformed in the quest for a heavenly city are to some extent echoed in this thesis.\(^9\) However, I would again seek to nuance this view in the light of Jerome’s employment of rhetoric to promote more than one agenda.

The feminist perspective of such historians as Patricia Cox Miller, Andrew Jacobs, Ross Kraemer and Elizabeth Clark that Jerome diminished women is scrutinised.\(^{10}\) His satire, a formidable weapon in his rhetorical arsenal, I argue, is not directed against all women.\(^{11}\) Never doubting their intellect and virtue, once they had renounced the conventional paths of marriage and family life, he lays at their disposal his vast store of learning. Asella, like all of Jerome’s correspondents, is first introduced as an ascetic heroine. While still young, she had sold a gold necklace against her Christian parents’ wishes in order to buy a simple, brown dress, as a precursor to a life of seclusion and prayer.\(^{12}\) As with most of Jerome’s correspondence, this letter was intended for a wider audience than the addressee, so Jerome salutes the women of his coterie: Paula, heiress to the Aemilian clan, a widow, some years his junior; her daughter, Julia Eustochia; Marcella, who had guided Eustochia’s vocation; Albina, Marcella’s mother; another Marcella; Marcellina; and Felicitas, all members of the nobilitas.\(^{13}\) Marcella, Paula and Eustochia were his principal correspondents.\(^{14}\) The women’s interest in Eastern asceticism preceded their acquaintance with him.\(^{15}\) They were already well-read in the Scriptures, ascetica and the classical canon. The abundance of classical and Scriptural references in the letter to Asella testifies to Jerome’s honouring of their learning. Paul Antin, citing the introduction to Jerome’s commentaries on Ephesians and Galatians, dedicated to his female patrons, suggests that Jerome’s readers are capable of their own research.\(^{16}\) Therefore, I suggest that Jerome fashioned and promoted independence in

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\(^{11}\) See below 92–7, 173 and 177–180.

\(^{12}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 24.3 presents her as an *exemplum* for other dedicated virgins.


\(^{14}\) Approximately a quarter of his letters were written to them; the majority to Marcella. For Marcella’s role in Paula’s and Eustochium’s conversions to asceticism, see Jerome, *Epp.* 22.28; 46.1.

\(^{15}\) The *consolatio* for Paula and Marcella provide descriptions of their early introduction to asceticism; see Jerome *Epp.* 108; 127 respectively.

female scholarship. The letter also intimates a type of friendship that was unusual in its time that would prove to be more than the quid pro quo of Roman political and social congress. Clark argues Jerome sought ‘equality and similarity, especially similarity in virtue’. However, he did not seek to bring about ‘an incorporation into maleness’, as Clark argues, in order to achieve this friendship. Gender identity was maintained in Jerome’s eschatology. He formulated a new paradigm of friendship between men and women. For other women, he would offer a quasi-episcopal oversight, when his reputation was waning. As Greek philosophy was not Jerome’s strong suit, it seems more likely that the friendship he had in mind was influenced by Cicero rather than Aristotle:

Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benivolentia et caritate consensio; qua quidem haud scio an excepta sapientia nihil melius homini sit a dis immortalibus datum.

(For friendship is nothing other than agreement with goodwill and affection on all things divine and human. And indeed I don’t know whether anything better has been given to mankind by the immortal gods, with the exception of wisdom.)

This may have been his hope but this letter exposes the vulnerability of Jerome’s position without the patronage of women like Asella, affecting what he wrote and thus testifying to their agency. He needed her goodwill to salvage his reputation amongst

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19 See discussion in Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, 37–8, quoting Aristotle’s Nicomachaean ethics VIII, 8, 5, 1159b.
21 Jerome, Ep. 84.6.
22 See Chs. 5 and 6 below. Pace Carolline White, Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), 11. She asserts that Synesius, Ambrose and Jerome ‘remained dominated by pagan thought on the subject and only superficially accommodated their ideas to a Christian context.’
23 See 207ff. below.
24 See Pierre Courcelle, Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1969), 64–72. Courcelle offers a balanced critique of Jerome’s claims about philosophy.
26 This is particularly evident in his correspondence with the Aniciae. See Ch. 4 below.
his women patrons, on whom he was dependent for his defence and support. Further, the letter reflects tensions, ever-present, where status and rank are being negotiated:

Rhetorical training gave students the tools to negotiate social relations, and … they used these tools both to renew and subtly to resist inequalities of wealth and power.27

Jerome was able to distinguish himself from other ascetic mentors and clergy by virtue of his expensive education. But to avoid being perceived as a legacy hunter, he needed to present himself as a benefactor to the women. Yet when Jerome wrote the letter to Asella, the persona he had carefully constructed was in danger of fracturing. In the following section, I have focused on how this had come about and the significance for Jerome in terms of this thesis.

**Jerome, His Life**

Jerome had few connections necessary for the advancement in Roman society of his asceticism and his scholarship. Both were unpopular: the former because of its stringency and attack on the family; and the latter because of its innovative ‘text-critical and hermeneutical methodology’.28 He was a *parvenu* from Stridon, a town somewhere near the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia, the bad lands of the Empire.29 His parents were able to pay for an elite education under the famous Roman grammarian, Aelius Donatus and later in a school of rhetoric.30 He would trade on connections made at this time, most notably with the senator, Pammachius. After a period in Trier, in northern Gaul and then Aquileia (368–372), he shelved his ambitions for a lucrative career in the imperial service in Aquileia and joined an ascetic group that included childhood friends and schoolmates, notably Rufinus and Bonosus.31 The former’s life would parallel Jerome’s: the adoption of rigorous asceticism lived in the East in the company of an

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30 Kaster suggests that Jerome was better off than Augustine, as he had no difficulty with the high fees for tuition and the cost of living in Rome. See Robert A Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 25.
31 For Jerome’s friendship with Bonosus, see Jerome, *Epp.* 34.
aristocratic female patron, and devotion to scholarship. The friendship would end in acrimony over the Origenist controversy. The cell in Aquileia came to an end, ‘subito turbine’ (‘in a sudden storm’). Jerome left for Antioch in 371, where he lived for nine years. He moved to the ‘desert’ of Chalcis, an experience from which he drew much of his early spiritual authority by means of an astute collection of letters dramatising his experiences, creating the heroic, desert ascetic and scholar. However, I suggest that these were not the only identities he assumed. Jerome nuanced his persona to suit his audience. In displacing the men in the lives of his women, he would assume the persona of *paterfamilias* and a quasi-episcopal authority. He represented himself as a latter day Moses and Paul. The roles of martyr, defender of orthodoxy and successor to Origen were also assumed.

**Jerome’s Asceticism in Context**

Asceticism was not monochrome, as we will see later in Jerome’s conflict with Jovinian and Pelagius. Origen had provided its theoretical foundation in attempting to ascertain the place of human effort in salvation and the ‘transcendence of spirit over flesh’. In the late fourth century, competition for authority existed amongst ascetics, other church leaders and even the secular authorities to ‘define, teach and exemplify the virtues of the Christian religion’.

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35 Evagrius was the chief recipient of Jerome’s letters before his return to Rome. See Jerome, *Epp.* 3.3; 4.2; 5.3; 6.5.


37 For other roles assumed by Jerome, see Charles Favez, “Saint Jérôme peint par lui-même,” *Latomus* 16, no. 4 (1957): 655.

38 See *paterfamilias*: 35; 55–6; 94; 172; quasi-episcopal: 72, 231, 207ff for further discussion of these roles.

39 For representation as Moses, see: 110, 154, 159–61; Paul: 1, 17–19, 111–12, 154, 159–61, 183, 236, 243 below.

40 See Jerome as martyr: 19; 114 below; defender of orthodoxy: 46 ff., 97–8, 154 below and latter day Origen: 8–10 above; 19 below.

41 See 86–7; 148–50 below.


43 Ibid., 256
Philip Rousseau points out how the hagiography of the desert holy men, especially the *Life of St Anthony*, appealed to the governing classes with its romanticising of the ‘desert’.\(^44\) But Egyptian *papyri* and archaeological evidence suggests that both hermits and monks generally lived either within or in close proximity to towns.\(^45\)

The traditional foundations of eremitic and monastic asceticism originated in Egypt: the former attributed to St Anthony (251–356) and the latter to Pachomius (292–348?).\(^46\) Nitria, near Alexandria was regarded as one of the foremost centres of monasticism.\(^47\)

When Julian Saba established his monastery in the mid-fourth century, Syria and Antioch developed a name for rigorous asceticism.\(^48\) In Constantinople, the asceticism of John Chrysostom, a younger contemporary of Jerome, was characterised by a concern for pastoral care.\(^49\) Constantinople was also notable for the consecration of virgins. Athanasius wrote the following to Constantine:

> Ταύτας καὶ Ἐλληνες ὡρόντες ὡς ναὸν θαυμᾶζουσίν παρ’ οὐδενὶ γάρ ἀληθῶς τοῦτο τὸ σεμνὸν καὶ οὐράνιον ἐπάγγελμα κατορθοῦται ἢ παρὰ μόνοις ἡμῖν τοῖς Χριστιανοῖς. Μάλιστα γάρ καὶ τοῦτο μέγα τεκμήριον ἐστὶ τοῦ παρ’ οὐδενὶ τὸ νάστος καὶ ἀληθῆ θεσπέβειαν

(And the Greeks, on seeing these women, express their admiration of them as being a temple of the Word. For indeed this holy and heavenly profession is nowhere established, but only among us Christians. Most of all it is decisive proof that with us is to be found the genuine and true religion.)\(^50\)

Athanasius, exiled during the Arian controversy, is reputed to have brought Eastern monasticism to Rome c. 339–43. Asceticism was beginning to penetrate Gaul and the West initially through the efforts of Martin of Tours. Ascetic writing, like Jerome’s, that drew on the traditions of Antony and Pachomius *inter alia* was concerned with pastoral

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\(^{44}\) Paula had been so captivated by Epiphanius and Paulinianus that she was ready to abandon Rome for the East, Jerome, *Ep.* 108.6; Marcella was reputed to have been inspired by Athanasius but this seems doubtful. See Laurence, *Jérôme et le nouveau modèle féminin*, 20.

\(^{45}\) P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), xviii.

\(^{46}\) Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries*, 256.

\(^{47}\) See comments on Egypt’s status in Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, 44.

\(^{48}\) Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “‘Incense in Our Land’: Julian Saba and Early Syrian Christianity,” in *Wilderness: Essays in Honour of Frances Young*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 120.


\(^{50}\) Athanasius, *Apol. ad Const.* 33.49 (PG 25).
issues, moral formation and teaching. It often related to defining orthodoxy, while having to avoid accusations of Manichaeism.\(^{51}\) Moreover, the ascetic endeavour was focused on bringing about change in towns and cities, the centres of a broader Christianity as Rousseau so aptly puts it in his subtitle: ‘Leadership and Ascetic Virtue: The Desert comes to Town.’\(^{52}\) Rousseau sees in the writings of Jerome a ‘recolonization of the imagination of the Latin West’ by Antioch, Alexandria, western Syria and Egypt with his promotion of rigorous eastern asceticism.\(^{53}\)

Although Jerome had experienced ill-health and culture shock and had wrestled with his libido in his cell at Chalcis, he had not been alone.\(^{54}\) He had had access to students, copyists and a substantial library.\(^{55}\) Rousseau provides a sympathetic appraisal of the difficulties that Jerome experienced among Eastern monks, who were theologically more acute than he.\(^{56}\) Eighteen months later, he fled again to Antioch, driven out by the Meletian controversy and his association with the schismatic bishop, Paulinianus, who ordained him there. He became acquainted with Bishop Epiphanius of Cyprus.\(^{57}\) Both men would exercise influence over his future.\(^{58}\) He spent two years in Constantinople, claiming later, to bolster his reputation for orthodoxy, to have been taught by Gregory of Nazianzus.\(^{59}\) Gregory almost certainly aroused his interest in Origen.\(^{60}\) Jerome, anxious to assert his orthodoxy, stated:


\(^{52}\) Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries*, 255.

\(^{53}\) Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, xxiii.


\(^{55}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 5.2.

\(^{56}\) Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, 99–108. See also Jerome, *Ep.* 17.2. The monks, enlisted in the Sabellian controversy, regarded him as Sabellian, as he did not accept the three *hypostases* doctrine: Kelly, Jerome, *His Life Writings and Controversies*, 67.


\(^{60}\) Gregory wrote his *Philokalia* (Five Theological Orations), a compilation of extracts from Origen, around 380. See Alistair E. McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 53.
Multi anni sunt, quod ab adolescentia usque ad hanc aetatem, diversa scripsi opuscula, semperque habui studium audientibus loqui, quod publice in ecclesia didiceram.

(From my youth up until this present age, many years have passed in which I have written various works and I have endeavoured to teach my hearers what I had learned publicly in the Church.)

Neil Adkin argues that Jerome dismissed Gregory as an exegete but sought to bolster his prestige by trading on Gregory’s reputation in the West. He points out the similarity in phrases between Jerome’s admonition of Nepotian not to indulge in oratorical tricks – ‘verba volvere et celeritate dicendi …’ (‘to roll out words and [incite admiration of the ignorant] by rapidity of speech …’) – and the entry on Gregory’s rhetoric in *De viris illustribus*. Jerome recounted an anecdote in which he asked Gregory for exegesis of δευτερόπρωτον in Luke 6.1: Gregory ‘eleganter lusit’ (‘wittily teased’) Jerome that he should attend church, for, when Gregory was applauded, Jerome would be obliged to accept whatever he had said. Jerome is suggesting that Gregory was more interested in the excellence of his delivery than rigorous exegesis. This does not necessarily represent hostility towards Gregory; rather it represents Jerome’s typical placing of himself centre stage and his name-dropping. Moreover, Jerome shared with Gregory a concern to provide an ontological justification for asceticism.

Origen became Jerome’s benchmark for a new Christian literature that was both scriptural and exegetical. Manlio Simonetti maintains that Jerome’s early, mostly Pauline commentaries, ‘are little more than paraphrases of Origen, combined with touches of Didymus and Apollinaris’. Jerome’s dependence on Origen is evident in

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61 Jerome, *Ep.* 133.12. See also *Epp.* 15.2; 50.1.
the parallel *catena* in his commentary on Ephesians. However, in responding to Simonetti, Andrew Cain clearly demonstrates that Jerome brought his own creativity to these commentaries, especially that on Galatians, describing it as:

A masterful synthesis of both East and West – the wisdom of the Greek patristic tradition and a remarkably high proportion of deftly deployed elements taken from the Latin literary tradition, in both its classical and patristic incarnations that bears the indelible stamp of Jerome’s creativity.

Jerome had recourse to Origen’s *Hexapla*, but he claimed his own exegetical authority as a trilingual exegete, ‘ego … hebraeus, graecus, latinus trilinguis’. In support of this claim, Hillel Newman states that, ‘a considerable debt to Jewish exegesis, above and beyond anything he could find in the writings of his predecessors, substantiates Jerome’s claim to have used Jewish sources’.

Eusebius reports that Origen was supported by a woman, Juliana, especially in accessing manuscripts. Further he taught both men and women the Scriptures and employed female scribes. Jerome paralleled these actions in developing his persona as a second Origen.

**Rome, Jerome’s Heartland**

After the Council of Constantinople, called in 381 to resolve the Arian question, Jerome departed for Rome as part of an embassy to Damasus to explain the outcome. Benoit Jeanjean suggests that Jerome would adhere to a strict Nicene orthodoxy and, in his later polemics against John of Jerusalem and Rufinus, he represented as dogma what

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67 See Adkin, “Some Notes on the Dream of St. Jerome,” 294–300. For acknowledgement of Jerome’s debt to Origen, see Jerome *Epp.* 33.4; 61.2; 84.2.


Origen had presented as merely propositions. Jerome stayed on in Rome dedicating to Damasus his translation of Origen’s commentary on the Song of Songs.

Meanwhile, his ‘letters of reproach’, mentioned above, were circulated to attract patronage. He was taken up by a group of women who ‘fled the cloying Roman atmosphere for the harsh air of the desert. The “respectable Christianity” that Rome was adopting offered them no satisfaction’.

Both Ammianus Marcellinus and Jerome describe this world as socially limited, populated by children, slaves and obsequious clients. Frustration and boredom provided the incentive for a ‘competitive salon culture’ through the patronage of priests and scholarly monks such as Jerome.

A shrill certainty characterised Jerome’s teaching, at a time when ‘there was uneasiness in Rome’. Still, Jerome’s credentials as a monk and scholar were impressive and his elegant rhetorical skill marked him out as ‘the right sort of gentleman’. Cain may overstate the social gap between the women and Jerome. It was not as great as that of Syrian monks he derides. In Rome, he despised their chains and unkempt appearance as affectations. His library in the desert was a mark of an expensive predilection.

However, of neither senatorial rank, nor fabulously wealthy, he needed a social network congenial to his aspirations and ecclesial support in an unpopular enterprise. Jerome ‘reminds’ Asella that he enjoyed acclaim as a mentor to studious women:

77 See Yarborough, “Christianization in the Fourth Century,” 152. See reasons for uneasiness above at 1.
82 For the cost and nature of Jerome’s library, see Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 133–66.
83 Paula owned the city of Actium. See Jerome’s prologue to *Comm. in ep. ad Titum* (PL 26).
Multa me virginum crebro turba circumdedit; divinos libros, ut potui, nonnullis saepe disserui: lectio adsiduitatem, adsiduitas familiaritatem, familiaritas fiduciam fecerat.

(Frequently a large crowd of virgins gathered around me; to a few I often discoursed on the sacred books, as I was able: reading created assiduity, assiduity had created intimate acquaintance and intimate acquaintance had created trust.)

Here, Jerome portrays the possibility of friendship between the sexes, based on a mutual commitment to study of the Scriptures and celibacy. Jerome’s writing frequently reveals a theatrical quality: in this example, a scene is created of a patron thronged by his clients (turba), implying that Jerome had authority and gifts to dispense. The terms are sufficiently ambiguous to reflect at the very least amicitia, friendship amongst equals, but also implied intimacy (familiaritas) through education. However, this moment in the sun was short lived, despite Jerome’s claims that he was destined for the highest honours:

Antequam domum sanctae Paulae nossem totius in me urbis studia consonabant. Omnium paene iudicio dignus summo sacerdotio decernebar; beatae memoriae Damasi os meus sermo erat; dicebar sanctus, dicebar humilis et disertus.

(Before I became acquainted with the household of the saintly Paula, enthusiasm for me resounded throughout Rome. I was singled out as being worthy of the highest priestly office in the judgment of almost everybody. My views were on the lips of Damasus of blessed memory; I was deemed saintly, I was called humble and learned.)

In the two quotes immediately above, Jerome adroitly defends himself to both his patrons and his enemies. In the first quote, he points out that he did not seek his students

84 Jerome, Ep. 45.2.
85 See s.v. 1 assiduitas in the context of amicitia in Tacitus, Dialog. de orator. 5.2, ‘usu amicitiae et assiduitate contubernii’ (‘by the experience of friendship and the constant attendance of comrades at arms’) in Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds, A Latin Dictionary (Oxford: OUP, 1879).
87 Jerome, Ep. 45.3.
but that they flocked to him. The word ‘fiducia’ testifies to Jerome’s honourable behaviour, countering accusations that he had ‘oculus petulans’ (‘a roving eye’). Next, he reminds his readers that he had the favour of Pope Damasus who had encouraged his controversial revision of the Old Latin Scriptures, as well as his asceticism, and in quoting him, authenticated both his scholarship and good-standing. But now Damasus was dead and the unsympathetic Siricus was pope.

In later years, Jerome would modify the reasons for his departure from Rome, in accordance with the persona he was trying to project. He had made known his contempt for the clergy in a series of recognisable caricatures. The epithets directed at Jerome, reported in the letter to Asella, suggest that he was considered guilty of class treachery in turning his satire on his clerical colleagues: ‘ego probosus, ego versipellis et lubricus, ego mendax et Satanae arte decipiens’ (‘I am a disgrace, I am a slippery turncoat, a liar deceiving with Satanic skill’). It was one thing to deride the vice and frailty of women. Juvenal had set the standard, turning the *matrona* into a *meretrix* in an anti-matrimony diatribe. But caricaturing other clergy was unpardonable, though clearly he had an appreciative audience in his correspondents. However, here Jerome asserts that it was his connection with Paula that had been the occasion of his disgrace. I will argue below that Jerome’s attachment to her differed from his friendship with his other patrons. The level of intimacy is already evident in the use of *Eustochium*, a pet name, for Julia Eustochia.

Jerome disingenuously expresses amazement that his actions could be misconstrued:

89 Rebenich suggests Jerome’s claim to have translated the whole NT is ‘an intentional exaggeration’ (a neat *double entendre*) in Rebenich, “The ‘Vir Trilinguis’ and the ‘Hebraica Veritas’,” 51.
90 Siricus was a traditionalist with regard to marriage, in line with most clergy and lay Christians. For the alienation arising from *Ep*. 22 and *adv. Helv.*, see David G. Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth Century Rome,” *JECS* 1, no. 1 (1993).
96 Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 198ff.

(Whose money have I taken? Have I not despised all gifts, whether small or great? Has anyone’s small change jingled in my hand? Has my language been ambiguous, or have I a roving eye? No; nothing renders me guilty unless it is my sex, and even this is never used against me except when Paula sets out for Jerusalem.)

Touting for legacies by clergy was a problem for the Church. Valentinian had initiated legislation making it a criminal offence. Jerome, himself, had fulminated against it. By his own account, he had received gifts from Eustochium. Damasus also had been assiduous in his attentions to rich women, so perhaps Jerome was deemed guilty by association.

The premature death of Paula’s daughter, Blesilla, had been attributed to Jerome’s teaching on rigorous fasting. Moreover, his attacks on the subintroductae, women who shared accommodation with monks in a ‘spiritual’ relationship, smacked of hypocrisy when the news circulated of his intended pilgrimage to the east with Paula. Paula had fainted at Blesilla’s funeral, but this pilgrimage seemed to suggest that she was now in thrall to him.

The reason for Jerome’s banishment is obscure. Whether or not he intended to stay abroad is unclear. Cain, in his admirably researched work, argues that Paula’s relations, anxious about her patrimony, had pressured the ecclesiastical authorities, accusing Jerome of seducing her. However, his claim that he is providing ‘some fresh

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97 Jerome, Ep. 45.2. For Jerome’s enjoyment in making enemies, see Brown, “Aspects of Christianization,” 270.
99 Jerome, Ep. 22.28, 40.
100 Jerome, Ep. 44.
101 Ammianus Marcellinus, Re. gest. 27.3, 12–15; Brown questions these accusations, written by opponents, against Damasus. Damasus, like Jerome, represented a new social mobility in Roman society. See Brown, Through the Eye of a Needle, 252.
102 Jerome, Ep. 37.6.
104 The desire to retire from the city is a common topos in elite writing and does not necessarily express a serious intention. See Jerome, Ep. 43; Seneca, de otio de brevitate vitae 4.2.
105 Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 100–24.
insight into a perennially perplexing problem’ of the trial ‘seems to want to prove more than the sources will bear’. First, Cain’s proposal that Paula’s family heeded rumours that Jerome ‘had been suspected of bilking heiresses’ is unsubstantiated. Jerome did not ‘free range’ through the heiresses of the Aventine. He ministered to a select, close-knit group related by kinship, as his salutation above indicates. Second, Cain posits family opposition based on Paula’s rejoinder to her critics that, far from robbing her children by giving to the poor, ‘maiorem se eis hereditatem Christi misericordiam dimittere’ (‘she is imparting to them a greater inheritance, namely the mercy of Christ’). Paula, in fact, made financial provision for the children she left behind. Cain’s argument that a charge of seduction was laid against Jerome, rather than that of captator, because the latter was more difficult to prove in a secular court, is also problematic, since the penalty, exile, was precisely what her family would have sought to avoid.

The evidence may suggest that a question over Jerome’s orthodoxy lay at the heart of his banishment. Living down allegations of immorality was de rigeur for mentors to women, as shown by Jerome’s own accusations against others. Harder to deal with were accusations of heterodoxy, given the turbulence of the theological debates already experienced by Jerome. Cain dismisses, as a ‘red herring’, Jerome’s reference to his trial before the Pharisaeorum senatus being ‘quasi indicto sibi praelio doctrinarum’ (‘as if it were a dispute of doctrine’). He cites as proof, Rufinus’ threat, reproduced by Jerome, to reveal the truth about the trial:

Numquid et ego non possum enarrare tu quomodo de urbe discesseris, quid de te in praesenti iudicatum sit, quid postea scriptum, quid iuraveris, ubi navim conscenderis, quam sancte periurium vitaveris? Poteram pandere, sed plura reservare statui quam proferre.

(Am I not able to recount how you left the city, what verdict was handed down about you at that time, what was written afterward, what you

107 Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 110.
108 Jerome, Ep. 108.5. Jerome’s heroines are characteristically presented as in conflict with the world.
111 Jerome, Ep. 22.28.
112 For the Meletian debate, see 8–9 above.
swore, where you boarded the ship, how sanctimoniously you avoided perjury? I could have elaborated, but I decided to keep back more than I relate.)

Yet, the simplest reading of ‘quam sancte periuurium vitaveris’ before an ecclesiastical court suggests a matter of doctrine. Jerome’s threat to retaliate in kind also indicates a doctrinal issue, in view of Rufinus’ own alleged Origenism. Jerome’s banishment, I contend, was based on his eastern allegiances; not sufficiently heretical for excommunication but enough to see him off, since he had alienated so many clergy. Far more damaging to him, as an exegete and scholar, would be exposure of past questions of doctrine than a passé scandal, lived down in the public arena of Bethlehem.

Jerome did not meekly accept his disgrace. His petition supposedly dashed off in a passion of grief – ‘Haec, mi domina Asella, cum iam navem conscenderem, raptim flens dolensque conscripsi’ (‘I have written this letter hastily, my lady Asella, weeping and grieving since coming on board the ship’) – is rhetorically polished. Reminding his supporters of his integrity, he points out how he repudiated conventional modes of feminine attraction: garments of silk, jewels, cosmetics or gold adornments, proclaiming the deeply penitential nature of the women he mentored:

Nulla fuit Romae alia matronarum, quae meam posset domare mentem, nisi lugens atque ieunans, squalens sordibus, fletibus paene caecata, quam continuis noctibus domini misericordiam deprecantem sol saepe deprehendit.

(No other married woman of Rome would occupy my thoughts unless, she was weeping and fasting, squalid with grime, almost blind from weeping and one whom, after begging the Lord’s mercy throughout the night, the sun often came upon.)

Jerome locates Paula in the company of Melania the Elder, who had higher social status than Paula and an established reputation for holiness, having defended the Nicene

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115 Origen’s On First Principles, where he argued for continuity and discontinuity of the body, gave rise to the belief that he spiritualised the resurrection. Origen was reacting against some Alexandrine Christians who saw the resurrection in terms of a gross extension of this life. See Mark S. M. Scott, Journey Back to God: Origen and the Problem of Evil (Oxford: OUP, 2012).  
116 Jerome, Ep. 45.6.  
117 Jerome, Ep. 45.3
confession at Nitria. This association establishes Jerome’s own Nicene orthodoxy. He derides worldly Christians who condemn Paula and Melania for behaving ‘inepte et aniliter’ (‘foolishly and like old women’) in their belief in the resurrection. By attacking the orthodoxy of the mockers, he assumes a similar martyrdom to godliness and orthodoxy. His parting shot against the ‘worldlings’ takes precisely the form that brought opprobrium on him in the first place. Satire, with its appeal to the senses, would prove the most effective weapon in promoting the moral superiority of asceticism in pouring contempt on self-indulgence.

Tu attagenam ructuas et de comeso acipensere gloriaris, ego faba ventrem inpleo; te delectant cachinnantium greges, Paulam Melaniamque plangentium.

(You belch up wild fowl and delight in a meal of sturgeon; I fill my stomach with beans. A troop of jesters gives you pleasure, those who weep delight Paula and Melania.)

Jerome adopts the persona of Israel, the faithful remnant in exile, preferring the struggles that lie ahead in Jerusalem, to the comforts of Babylon (Rome): ‘stultus ego, qui volebam canticum domini in terra aliena’ (‘I, who wanted to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, was foolish’). His Hebraic interpolations and a complex series of allusions from Scripture remind his recipients and his enemies of his spiritual and Hebraic authority. Though obliged to acknowledge his dependence on Asella, he again asserts his own status.

The list of women greeted at the end of the letter is evocative of the endings of Paul’s letter to the Romans, endorsing Jerome’s authority as mentor to women, but also their worth, as students of Scripture. Paul’s salutations begin with a commendation of Phoebe, as Paul’s patron. Also mentioned are Prisca, who is given precedence over her husband, Aquila; Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus’ mother, Julia and

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118 Kelly, Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies, 121. After the Origenist dispute he will portray Rufinus as being under Melania’s thumb. See Jerome, Ep. 53.7.
119 The senses are all employed.
120 Jerome, Ep. 45.5.
121 Jerome, Ep. 45.6; Jerome is paraphrasing Ps. 127.4, the lament of Israel in Babylon.
122 See Rom. 16.1–16, for the complement of female names. Unlike Jerome’s, Paul’s women came from a cross section of society, ethnically and socially.
Nereus’ sister. That the letter to the Romans was on Jerome’s mind is confirmed in his own salutations to his women:

Et dic eis: “Ante tribunal Christi stabimus; ibi parebit, qua mente quis vixerit.” Memento mei, exemplum pudicitiae et virginitatis insigne.

(And tell them, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and the way of thinking by which each person will have lived, will become obvious there.” Remember me, my outstanding example of chastity and virginity.)

Paul’s greeting to Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, and Persis are signified by the commendation: ‘laboravit/laborant in Domino’. Jerome had embraced Origen’s interpretation of ascetic labour in terms of study of the Scripture.

The insistence on ceaseless labour, a constant feature of Jerome’s evocation of the *ars scripturarum*, derives from Origen’s own writings … the psalmist’s image of the man “meditating night and day on the law of the Lord” is regularly associated with the task of the Christian interpreter.

In his conclusion to the letter, Jerome assumes Paul’s mantle, commending women and so validating his own ministry to women. Paul praises the labour of the women in Rome; Jerome implicitly praises the ascetic labour of his Roman women. Paul salutes Persis affectionately – ‘salutate Persidam [sic] carissimam’ (‘Greet Persis, who is very dear’) – while Jerome defiantly addresses Paula and Eustochium with unusual affection: ‘Saluta Paulam et Eustochium – velit nolit mundus, in Christo meae sunt’ (‘Greet Paula and Eustochium, whether the world wills it or not, they are mine in Christ’).

Jerome assumes the role of martyr:

Maleficum me quidam garriunt: titulum fidei servus agnosco; magum vocabant et Iudaei Dominum meum, seductor et apostolus dictus est.

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123 *Juniam* is feminine here, but indeterminate in the Greek.
125 See Rom 16.6, 12(a) and (b).
126 Jerome, Epp. 43.1; 127.4.
127 Vessey, “Jerome’s Origen,” 135. Vessey cites 40 references to Ps 1.2 in Origen’s extant works.
128 See Jerome as a new Paul in Epp. 22.3, 11; 130.2.
129 See 195ff below.
(They call me an enchanter, and as a slave I acknowledge the sign of my faith. The Jews called my Master a sorcerer, and the Apostle [Paul], was declared a deceiver.)

Like the Christ and Paul, he is abused by his enemies, implying Rome will be spiritually and intellectually the poorer on his departure. Nevertheless, he provides a testimony for Rome in the women he leaves behind.

**Life in the ‘Wilderness’: Conflict and Labour**

Jerome, Paula and Eustochium settled in twin monasteries at Bethlehem. Jerome, in the persona of a Western Origen, worked prolifically. In the years 387–93 he translated Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, the Solomonic books, Chronicles, Psalms and Job all from the *LXX*: Psalms, the Prophets, Samuel, Kings and Job from the Hebrew, and Origen’s *Homilies on Luke*. He wrote *Commentarioli in Psalmos* and commentaries on Ecclesiastes, Nahum, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Habbakuk. In addition, he wrote a *tractatus* on the Psalms, his books on Hebrew names and places and *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. The bulk of Jerome’s commentaries written from Bethlehem were dedicated to his female patrons.

In 393 Bishop Epiphanius, Jerome’s mentor, denounced John of Jerusalem as an Origenist heretic. Origen’s teaching, though much admired in his native Egypt, was beginning to come under suspicion for denying the resurrection of the body. Jerome repudiated Origen, claiming to have embraced Origen’s exegetical methodology rather than his theology. John excommunicated Jerome for his fierce partisanship with Epiphanius, including a tendentious public prayer, ‘Domine, praesta Ioanni ut recte credat’ (‘Lord, grant that John may believe rightly’). Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, at first endorsed the ‘Tall Brothers’, four monks who were advocates of

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130 Rom 16.12(b); Jerome, *Ep.* 45.6.
131 Jerome, *Ep.* 43.1. This letter predates the controversy and drops hints for increased patronage.
133 Kelly, *Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies*, 198. As Origen’s scholarship matured, logical deduction was asserted less, in favour of a greater tendency to wrestle with the ambiguities of Scripture and accept the unknowable, so Jerome is not necessarily prevaricating, and the accusation of heresy not quite so clear. See Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 2010), 244.
Origen, but, in a *volte face*, had Origen condemned as a heretic at the Council of Alexandria in 400.\(^{135}\)

In 397, John had rescinded the excommunication, and Rufinus and Jerome were temporarily reconciled. On returning to Rome, Rufinus translated Origen’s *On First Principles*.\(^{136}\) Jerome responded with his own literal translation, attaching a conciliatory letter for Rufinus but this was suppressed by Pammachius.\(^{137}\) Both Jerome and Rufinus wrote *Apologiae* in their defence. Pope Anastasius of Rome eventually condemned the reading of Origen, but Rufinus emerged unscathed.\(^{138}\)

Jerome’s final years were marred by the death of Paula in 404.\(^{139}\) Ongoing conflict with the British monk, Pelagius, eventually came to a head.\(^{140}\) The earlier frostiness of Jerome towards Augustine melted in the face of a common enemy.\(^{141}\)

Jerome also corresponded with Gallic admirers, especially widows.\(^{142}\) His persona of mentor was nuanced to suggest episcopal authority.\(^{143}\) However, Vigilantus, a Gallic monk, attacked the veneration of relics, the sending of money to the Holy Land, monastic poverty and celibacy of the clergy. Jerome responded with his *Contra Vigilantum*.

Pammachius died during the sack of Rome in 410 and Marcella died the following year. Many Christians fled to Hippo, including Pelagius and the Aniciae.\(^{144}\) When the teaching of Caelistius, an associate of Pelagius, was condemned at Carthage in 411, Pelagius sought refuge with John of Jerusalem. On the intervention of Innocent, Bishop of Rome, Pelagius was expelled from Palestine in 417.\(^{145}\)

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137 See Jerome, *Epp.* 84; 81, respectively. Pammachius exercised the right of a patron.
138 For an even-handed account, see Kelly, *Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies*, 249–58.
142 See 237-41 below.
143 For his episcopal claims, see 231, 207ff. below.
144 See 125 below.
Jerome suffered bouts of severe illness during this latter period. Eustochium died in 418; her niece, Paula, had come to take her place in Bethlehem. Jerome died in 419, outliving friends, patrons and enemies.

**Approaches to Studying Jerome**

While appreciation of Jerome by his contemporaries was qualified, he successfully bequeathed his estimation of his importance to posterity. Jerome’s ability to set a dramatic scene led to frequent visual depiction of him.

Scholars reflect the interests of their age in studying Jerome. Josef Lössl suggests that facile judgments, affecting ‘cultural memory’, have been made about Jerome that were based on:

- Medieval representations of bizarre images of eccentric and extreme ascetic practices … and on the other hand the role ascribed to Jerome by the Catholic Counter-reformation, as translator of the Latin (Vulgate) Bible and promoter of typically ‘Catholic’ ecclesiastical traditions like monasticism, clerical celibacy, and the Papacy.

Jerome enjoyed great popularity in the Renaissance, where he was frequently adopted as patron saint by Humanists, including women:

- They saw in him the ancient Christian who, despite the dream of *Ep. 22.30*, did not deny his classical education in favour of Biblical learning and … stood for literary, as opposed to scholastic, erudition.

I will now briefly set out contours of approaches to the study of Jerome over the last century or so, as a means of delineating methods that will be employed or questioned in this thesis.

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146 He gives a touching account of old age in his prologue to *In Amos II*.
147 These biographical details are derived from Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 301; and Kelly, *Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies*.
148 Vessey, “Jerome’s Origen,” 135. Vessey suggests that his creation of a visual identity was such that no written biography emerged in the late Middle Ages. However, he appears in the repertoire of the great painters: da Vinci, Dürer, Titian, Rembrandt, Caravaggio and Rubens.
150 Ibid.
The nineteenth century witnessed a rediscovery of the ‘Church Fathers’. John Henry Newman’s biographer argues that this represented an attempt to recover what had been lost in the sixteenth century, namely ‘the character of mind and feeling of which Catholic doctrines are the just expression’. This era focussed on Jerome’s theology, his reputation as a scholar and his translation of the Scriptures. 

Jerome’s early twentieth-century biographers reflect the denominational divide of Lössl’s ‘cultural memory’, mentioned above. Ferdinand Cavallera, a Roman Catholic scholar, writes sympathetically of Jerome. Georg Grützmacher, a Protestant, generally places a negative construction on his actions.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a revival in patristic scholarship now entitled Early Christian Studies. David Wiesen’s ground-breaking thesis treated Jerome’s letters from the perspective of a literary genre, satire, thus providing a useful tool in understanding the techniques employed in Jerome’s rhetoric. However, I seek to qualify Wiesen’s interpretation of Letter 22 that ‘it may be considered the greatest slander against women since Juvenal’s sixth satire’. 

Psychological, sociological and anthropological methodology, together with the deconstructionist tools of literary theory have been applied to both the NT corpus and the writings of the Church Fathers. J. N. D. Kelly’s authoritative biography provides a wealth of historical, theological and prosopographical detail. He explains the complexity of Jerome’s sense of abandonment and his relationship with women in terms of his psychology. These insights are plausible but generally outside the scope of this thesis. I will argue that attention to other factors such as theological and eschatological vision, social power relations and employment of rhetorical τόποι, all provide insights into Jerome’s broader vision for Rome as a ‘holy city’.

The late twentieth century coincided with the movement for ordination of women and Early Christian Studies became popular amongst feminists. Scholars addressed issues such as:

154 Ibid., 119.
155 Kelly, *Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies*, 391.
hostile language and negative representations of women as products of the larger misogynist culture … or of particular psychological or personality traits of individual writers. These explanations were generally consistent in their strategy to detach such views, including opposition to women ministers and leaders from any authentic core of Christianity.\textsuperscript{156}

Thus early feminists looked to the writings of the New Testament and the Church Fathers for evidence of women’s ministry and authority in the Church, thereby addressing a lack of interest among scholars concerning the role of women in Late Antiquity.\textsuperscript{157} Epistolary and rhetorical studies, I argue, have tempered the conclusion of Clark’s early work that the only women acceptable to Jerome were those whose ‘bodies were lacerated by torture or defaced by prolonged fasting, weeping and exigent living and whose sexuality was safely contained by vows of virginity or celibacy’.\textsuperscript{158} Following Victor Turner’s social theory of ‘liminality’, she asserted that women had to renounce their ‘very gender identity’ to gain acceptance or friendship.\textsuperscript{159} She goes on:

Not only had they [women] divested themselves of money and property, as had male ascetics; they had also, unlike their male counterparts, renounced their very gender identity.\textsuperscript{160}

Clark cites marriage, motherhood and personal appearance as the principal elements of female gender identity that must be renounced for women to be acceptable to Jerome (and Chrysostom).\textsuperscript{161} To cast gender identity in these terms, I consider, verges on essentialism.\textsuperscript{162} Clark omits Jerome’s similar demands of male ascetics, who must give up the possibility of becoming husbands and fathers, and renounce the baths. Jerome asks Heliodorus whether he dreads, as a potential monk, ‘squalidi capitis horretinculta

\textsuperscript{156} Kraemer, “Women and Gender,” 477.
\textsuperscript{157} For the importance of women whose names are coupled with the ‘fathers’, see Rosemary Ruetther and Eleanor McLaughlin, Mothers of the Church (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) and Elizabeth Schlusser Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroads, 1983). Mary Daly retorts that the Church Fathers had nothing positive to say about women in Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Beaconsfield Press, 1975), 23.
\textsuperscript{158} Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, 52. See Jerome, Ep. 1.
\textsuperscript{160} Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, 49.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 50.
caesaries’ (‘ungroomed bushy hair bristling on a filthy head’).

Jerome required the same standards of renunciation for men, as for women:

Apud illos viros pudicitiae frena laxantur et solo stupro atque adulterio condemnato passim per lupanaria et ancillulas libid.o permittitur, quasi culpam dignitas faciat, non voluptas. Apud nos, quod non licet feminis, aeque non licet uiris.

(Amongst those men, the restraints for chastity are relaxed. While only rape and adultery are condemned, lust is permitted everywhere through the brothels and the slave-girls as if it were a matter of status causing the offence rather than carnality. Amongst us [Christians] what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men.)

An examination of the complexity of patronage and the employment of rhetoric will show that the women, far from being ‘reduced’ by their association with Jerome, had much to gain in terms of the disposal of their wealth, intellectual and spiritual fulfilment, a new status within society and power within the Church. Further, Jerome was not a puppet master. He was subject to external circumstances such as barbarian invasions and ecclesiastical disputes. More importantly, it can be demonstrated from epigraphic and intertextual evidence that the women were discriminating in what they accepted from his mentoring.

‘Writing Women’ and the ‘Linguistic Turn’

The development of literary theory in poststructuralism denied any possibility of discovering anything about anybody from writings in Late Antiquity, because language is essentially arbitrary, so the identity and intentions of the text are ‘irrelevant to its interpretation.

Recovering women from text is the most problematic. Peter Brown, following Levi Strauss, remarks that in the late second and third centuries: ‘Christian men used women to “think with”’. This statement has become a mantra in any

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163 Jerome, Ep. 14.10. In Ep. 60.6 Jerome regards sons (for men) as the blessing of the old Dispensation.

164 Jerome, Ep. 77.3.


166 On the Aniciæ, see 162–8 below.

167 The writings of Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard were early proponents. See comments on reading theological text in McGrath, Historical Theology, 244–5.

discussion of women in the texts of Late Antiquity. It intimates that the development of themes relating to women was ‘an ideal vehicle for rhetorical display’, an important means of exhibiting superiority among elite males. In addition, writing of a theological nature to women has less to do with ‘real women’ than with ‘the elaboration of the theological points that troubled their authors.’ According to this interpretation, women are reduced to non-persons or ‘blank pages’. Cox Miller expounds this view, where Eustochium, because of the threat of her sexuality, is expunged and re-written in biblical tropes. I offer an alternative to Cox Miller’s cultivated insights, by suggesting Jerome presents a grand, socio-political vision for a radically counter-cultural alternative to the traditional life mapped out for a young, aristocratic girl. Nevertheless, any examination in this thesis of Jerome’s letters, especially with regard to his attitude to women, must take this ‘linguistic turn’ into consideration; its insights are so important.

In ‘The Lady Vanishes’, Clark, employing a conceit derived from a 1938 Alfred Hitchcock film, addresses the linguistic turn from a feminist perspective. Jacobs, following Clark adds, ‘Scholars are much less confident today in our ability to peel back layers of male rhetoric and find the “real” woman concealed underneath’. Clark clarifies the problems of deconstructionist theories where, ‘categories were so fractured that historians could not even speak of “women” anymore; the decentring of the male subject eventually annihilated the female subject as well’. In attempting to find the clues to the ‘vanished lady’, Clark explores how feminist historians may engage with the poststructuralist debate without accepting all their premises. She argues that poststructuralists ‘vastly overrate the place of language in the constitution of the world,'

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172 For a commentary on this view, see Ch.3 below.
173 See Chs. 3; 4 below.
175 Ibid., 720.
are insensitive to issues of gender, and by decentring subjectivity, authorship, and agency, leave no ground on which a feminist politics can be built’. ¹⁷⁷

Clark identifies a further problem in Roland Barthes’ ‘effect of the real’: ‘the very details that social historians argue give veracity to the text are here repositioned as a creative artist’s attempt to manufacture an illusory reality in the reader’s imagination.’ ¹⁷⁸ The denial of the possibility of objectivity ‘seems to preclude the historian’s weighing of evidence according to agreed-on disciplinary standards’. ¹⁷⁹ Even more germane is the rejection of ‘subjects’. If ‘subjects’ are lost, then so is ‘agency’, and ‘the historian’s interest in change and causality is undercut’. ¹⁸⁰ Clark does not seem sanguine about how much can be learnt from narrative writing by men about women, although she concludes that it is more positive to have women depicted ‘as wise and beneficial than ignorant and malevolent (as they all too often are in ancient texts)’. ¹⁸¹

While she does not share Clark’s general pessimism with regard to discovering real women, Kraemer also regards antique Christian texts as ‘both gendered and gendering, constructing and inscribing gender on human beings and human actions and ideas’. ¹⁸² Nevertheless, she demonstrates that a case-by-case approach may discover roles that women may have had, such as patronage, in both Christian and Jewish communities.

Clark and Jacobs see a solution in the rigorous and wide-ranging critique presented by Gabrielle Spiegel:

> All texts occupy determined social spaces, both as products of the social world of authors and as textual agents at work in that world, with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations. In that sense, texts mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 416.
¹⁸⁰ Ibid. For the importance of causality and change for the historian, see William H. Sewell, Jnr, Logics of History, Social Theory and Social Transformation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1–21.
¹⁸¹ Clark, “‘Holy Women, Holy Words’,” 430.
constitute the discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform, depending on the case at hand.  

Jacobs attempts to discover Demetrias according to the ‘ascetic logic’ of her situation. However, more can be learnt of Demetrias by employing Spiegel’s methodology of ‘social logic’. I suggest that, while Jerome was the product of his society such that he employed the rhetoric of his elitist education to enhance his gloria, he also resisted certain Roman social institutions. Similarly, although patronage is a social reality in Jerome’s letters, the letters become ‘contestatory’ as they reveal negotiation for authority between his status as a scholar and the power inherent in the rank and wealth of the women. Therefore, the investigation of the letter to Demetrias will include her powerful mother and grandmother. William Sewell’s comment that, ‘the social temporality posited by historians is always a mix of continuity and change’ expresses another facet of Spiegel’s process to be explored.

**Jerome and Epistolography**

M. I. Hillberg’s edition contains all 121 of Jerome’s letters, regarded as genuine. Cain suggests that two additional letters, Epp. 18* and 27* to Presidius and Bishop Aurelius respectively, should be included. On the grounds of its anachronisms, Cain dismisses Stefan Rebenich’s acceptance of *Epistula ad Sophronium de ecclesia Lydensi.*

Jerome’s letters have been described as ‘the finest of Christian antiquity’. Among modern scholars, the taxonomy of Jerome’s letters has generally been based on their ‘primary subject matter’. Cain suggests a more useful classification would stem from the letter models in the handbooks of pseudo-Demetrius’ Typoi epistolikoi (100 BCE–200 CE) and pseudo-Libanius’ Epistolimaioi characteres (300–500 CE) as Jerome worked within epistolographic conventions. Cain identifies seventeen templates adopted by Jerome, most notably: Apologetic (14), Consolatory (12), Reproaching (8),

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185 See 77–8 below.
190 See Rebenich, *Jerome*, 79; and Antin, “Saint Jérôme et son lecteur.”
Paraenetic (17), Praising (14) and Exegetical (27).\textsuperscript{192} However, these numbers may be distorted in view of the letters that have been lost. For the purposes of this thesis, the most important gaps occur in the letters to the nuns at Aemona, to his estranged aunt, Castorina, and any that may have been written in addition to those extant, to Paula and Eustochium.\textsuperscript{193}

The letters are more than models of literary style and prosopographical detail.\textsuperscript{194} An understanding of epistolography in antiquity sheds light on Jerome’s purposes and may even mitigate assumptions about him, especially his attitude to women and his broader socio-political and ecclesial agenda.

Nevertheless, all letters are selective about what is said. As Michael Trapp has written:

\begin{quote}
in writing, letter-writers construct and project a persona which may bear all kinds of relationships (including a very slender one) to their character as perceived by others than their correspondent of the moment.\textsuperscript{195}
\end{quote}

Jerome was conscious of the nature of role assumption:

\begin{quote}
Cum enim ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei conditi sumus, ex vitio nostro personas nobis plurimas superinducimus. et quomodo in theatricalibus scaenis unus atque idem histrio nunc Herculem robustus ostentat, nunc mollis in Venerem frangitur, nunc tremulus in Cybelen, ita et nos, qui si mundi non essemus, odiremur a mundo, tot habemus personarum similitudines, quot peccata.
\end{quote}

(Although we were created in God’s image and likeness, from our own wilfulness we assume a host of identities, and just as on the stage at the theatre, one and the same actor now appears tough, as Hercules, now pliant, turned into a Venus or tremulous, now into a Cybele. So it is with us: we have as many identities as we have sins, who, if we were not of the world, would be hated by the world.)\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 209–19

\textsuperscript{193} See Jerome, \textit{Epp}.11 and 13 respectively. In \textit{de vir illus}. 135 Jerome claims to have written daily to Paula and Eustochium but these may have been written on \textit{tabulae}.

\textsuperscript{194} Cavallera, Grützmaier and Rebenich adopt this approach.


\textsuperscript{196} Jerome, \textit{Ep}. 43.2.
Jerome was a part of a long tradition of Christian letter writing, employed initially in the dissemination of the Gospel for the correction of belief and the maintenance of good order in the churches in the New Testament. Insights into the post-apostolic period derive from the letters of Ignatius, Clement and Polycarp. The ‘question and answer’ letters on the exegesis of Scriptures represented a development in the epistolary genre during the fourth and fifth centuries (although, pace Bardy, this occurs in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians). However, the genre had been in use in philosophy since classical times. Jacobs highlights the skill necessary to reduce a body of knowledge to a question and answer form in persuading to a point of view.

Epicurus and Seneca had expatiated on philosophical issues in letters but, by the time of Basil, Jerome and Augustine, ‘philosophy and rhetoric reached a synthesis that was the characteristic mark of both educated pagan and Christian letters’. Further, ‘the practice of gathering letters and copying such collections seems to have achieved a ubiquity in Late Antiquity, despite editors of this time looking back to the letter-collections of Cicero and Pliny, and of the New Testament, as models’. Cicero wrote to his secretary, Tiro: ‘Eas oportet perspiciam, corrigam: tum denique edentur’ (‘I need to survey them [the letters], make correction, then, indeed they will be published’).

The circulation of one’s letters, selected and edited, was a powerful means of self-promotion in the hands of a skilful practitioner. The following chapter will examine both Pliny’s and Jerome’s use of letters to create personae. Jerome archived his letters with the intention of editing and redistributing them as ascetic texts.

Rules existed as to the suitable τόποι for a letter and its generic conventions. Nevertheless, ‘its “codes” were constantly being negotiated and innovated upon to suit

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200 Andrew Gillett, “Letter-Collections in Late Antiquity: Reuse, Reduce, Recycle,” in *Epistolary Conversations: Opening the Letter of Classical and Late Antiquity, 22nd November 2010* (Sydney: Macquarie University, 2010).
203 Jerome, *De vir. illus.* 35.
the specific demands of time and place’. The \textit{consolatio} genre could be exploited for creating identity and authority. Cain, Rousseau and Jacqueline Carlon have identified this usage and I have drawn on their findings in this thesis. In a similar vein, Scourfield argues that, while a \textit{consolatio} may fill the role of a ‘threnody’ (lament), more frequently in Jerome it served as an \textit{exemplum}. But Jerome also drew on conventional classical formularies which were to ‘remove distress, cause it to subside, or diminish it as much as possible, or restrain it so that it cannot spread any further, or divert it elsewhere’.

Another common τόπος concerned a separation, either spatial or social, where the letter acted as a bridging mechanism, more or less adequate for the task of maintaining relationships or destroying them; especially if a visit were not possible. Near the beginning of a letter of this type, one recorded one’s feelings at receiving the recipient’s previous letter and at the end, one recorded greetings to others and the anticipation of a reunion. Jerome employs this τόπος in his letters to his Roman patrons from Bethlehem.

Trapp points out that Marcus Cornelius Fronto, whom Jerome admired, required that the writer should employ, ‘a fastidious choice of vocabulary drawing on the full resources of Latin literature’. Aesthetics were important. A letter was to be savoured and enjoyed. Jerome wrote such a letter in satirical vein to Marcella about Onasus. Pliny (also admired by Jerome) stated that letters should employ simple vocabulary and a direct style, but he was not adverse to literary embellishment in his \textit{consolatio} to Aefulanus Marcellinus on the death of Iunius Avitus.

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\begin{footnotes}
\item[204] Ebbeler, “Letters,” 466.
\item[209] Trapp, \textit{Greek and Latin Letters}, 36.
\item[210] See 217, 223–4 below.
\item[212] Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 40.
\end{footnotes}
Letters might be read aloud, often to members of the *domus*. Libanius summoned friends to listen to and discuss letters received.\(^{214}\) Pliny intended his writings for circulation among like-minded people.\(^{215}\) Rufinus maliciously recounts that pagans and Christians alike made copies of Jerome’s letter to Eustochium for the satirical portraits.\(^{216}\) Prior to 393, Jerome’s *Epistularum ad diversos liber*, letters of reproach from the Syrian wilderness, established his reputation as the ascetic mentor; his *Ad Marcellam epistularum liber*, his scholarship, especially his *veritas Hebraica*, and his exchange with Damasus, his status. *Epistles* 14, 22 and 39 were disseminated as masterworks.\(^{217}\) Cain suggests that Jerome’s letters circulated as discrete items, apart from the above collections.\(^{218}\) The destruction of the monasteries at Bethlehem in 416 may account for both gaps in our present collection and the lack of a substantial posthumous collection.\(^{219}\) Cain argues that until the eighth century, Jerome’s letters circulated in a number of small collections that merged into more substantial compilations by the ninth century.\(^{220}\)

**The Rhetoric of Letters**

I have alluded to the importance of rhetoric in the study of Jerome’s letter to Asella.\(^{221}\) The well-constructed letter became a mark of the educated elite. *Ars dicendi* was the sign of the self-controlled, civil, Roman male in the public arena.\(^{222}\) Cicero, Pliny and Jerome were ambitious men, trained in rhetoric, who availed themselves of the flexibility within the conventions of letter writing. Barbara Conring seeks to differentiate between a letter and a treatise but Jerome uses the terms *epistula*, *liber* and *libellus* interchangeably, when mentioning his letter to Eustochium.\(^{223}\) The categories and conventions of epistolary rhetoric and the extent to which these might be manipulated, are important for this thesis, as they affect the letters’ interpretation. Aline Canellis provides a detailed account of how Jerome cleverly switched between


\(^{216}\) Ruf. *Apol.* 2.5 (PL 21)


\(^{218}\) Ibid., 227

\(^{219}\) Ibid., 228. See also Jerome *Ep.* 139.


\(^{221}\) See 2–3 above.

\(^{222}\) Connolly, “Rhetorical Education,” 103.

rhetorical and unadorned styles. The methods of forensic rhetoric were applied to theological controversy in letters. Satire might be legitimately employed to diminish rivals, as illustrated in the letter to Asella. Jerome’s employment of satire has caused most misunderstanding about his attitude to women.

Second, paraenetic letters contained precepts, ‘gnomic sayings’ and argumentation designed to promote certain behaviours. Models of good behaviour, including the author’s own, were to be emulated and ‘negative models shunned’. Jerome’s letter to Asella concludes with the advice to observe his ‘exemplum pudicitae et virginitatis insigne’ (‘outstanding example of chastity and virginity’). The Christian teacher, as the philosopher Seneca had done in the past, wrote paraenetic letters advocating a way of life. Jerome’s treatises in the guise of ‘familiar’ letters fall into this category, most notably the letters to Eustochium, Furia, Salvina and Demetrias. However, Letter 22 moves from paraenetic to epideictic, as Jerome presents his vision of a new Rome, with Eustochium transfigured as a triumphal heroine of the new order. Conferring a single label onto each letter, such as paraenesis, ignores Jerome’s wider intent. Similarly, Jerome’s exegetical letters are used to answer questions but also to advocate his veritas Hebraica, particularly in the Liber epistularum ad Marcellam.

Third, epideictic letters of praise or blame were usually letters exchanged between clients and patrons, reflecting the hierarchical nature of Roman society. For the upper echelons of male society, honour achieved through public office, military achievement and wealth had to be displayed in public beneficence to obtain status within the community. Clients looked to the nobilitas to exercise a code of liberality expressed in such words as ‘benevolentia’, ‘benignitas’ and ‘gratia’.

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225 Rebenich, Jerome, 71.

226 See 17 above.

227 See 92–7; 173; 177–180; 217 below.


229 Jerome, Ep. 45.7.


231 See Jerome, Epp. 22; 54; 60 and 130 respectively.

232 See 122ff.

233 See 67 below.

practices in such a way that bishops came to exercise patronage. In epideictic letters, the client’s responsibility was to honour the patron, echoing his aspirations. But Jerome also used the *epitaphium*, a memorial to a patron, to bolster his own reputation or to exonerate himself.

Rhetoric had recourse to the classical canon. By the first century CE a ‘common pool’ of literature existed that ‘permitted educated men to exhibit themselves as such in the public eye and the civilizing effect of rhetoric’. Cheyfitz expresses it bluntly as ‘a savaging of the Other’. The ‘Other’ in Roman society included women, Greeks (foreigners) and actors, essentialised by their speech, actions or appearance. The literary canon sustained a diverse but coherent world view. Of Jerome’s employment of the canon, Vessey makes the important observation:

He was interested in mediating the Bible to a public of cultured Romans and conscious that the Scriptural text in its Old Latin versions was an affront to their sensibilities.

This problem is exemplified in Jerome’s account of his dream in which he was accused of being a Ciceronian, rather than a Christian, because he found the style of Scripture so uncouth. He created a counter-cultural figure on the literary scene: an educated Roman of the Late Empire who sought ‘to make a name (and a living) for himself as *scriptor de scripturis sanctis*. Vessey goes on to suggest this required adjustment on the part of his readers. The world view of the classical order was no longer acceptable, but the canon was not rendered obsolete. Jerome employed it in the promotion of his

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235 For changes in patronage in Late Antiquity see Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Wendy Mayer, “Patronage, Pastoral Care and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch,” *VChr.* 55, no. 1 (2001) qualifies this thesis. See also Pauline Allen, Bronwen Neil and Wendy Mayer, *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 35–63. The section indicated points to the ‘poor’ as a rhetorical construct. I take it that the views are not mutually exclusive but both need to be taken into account; see 39 below.

236 See 66–8 below: the *Epitaphia* to Marcella and Paula.

237 Connolly, “Rhetorical Education,” 104.


240 Ibid.


vision for a Rome prepared for the return of Christ. He demonstrates a vast acquaintance with literature but when he turns to the Scriptures, he is prepared to abase himself by studying Hebrew and koine Greek.

Aristocratic women were not ignorant of literature, as the Cento of Proba indicates. Jerome affirms their learnedness in lavishing his luxuriant epistolary style on them. He employs Virgil’s Aeneid to describe his women in heroic tropes. Putnam’s comment on the clash between Aeneas and Turnus is significant:

In the final books and especially in the last, Virgil is forced to have his hero play a double role, since, though Aeneas remains to some extent the ideal embodiment of future Rome as envisioned by his father Anchises in Book VI, he now becomes as well the actual instrument whereby this destiny is imposed.

I submit that he portrays his women as the ‘embodiment’ of a ‘future Rome’ and ‘the actual instrument’ of its construction.

Letters: Patronage and Friendship

Jerome’s familial letters seek to navigate the shoals of status and patronage. He portrays himself as a client in need to Asella, amicus with Pammachius, intimate with Marcella and in some cases, even a patron. This manipulation of status is an important theme in this thesis, since an understanding of the authority that the women exercise as patrons confirms why they cannot be reduced to mere literary creations.

David Konstan describes friendship among the Romans as ‘a voluntary bond of mutual devotion’. Amicus may designate someone of equal status or could be conferred on an inferior as a courtesy. But ambiguity remained. As to whether one was a client or a friend, Konstan points out that though ‘Horace calls himself Maccenas’ friend, it does not follow that he would refuse the label, “client”.

244 See 76–7; 105; 116; 243–5, 259 below.
245 See 114–15; 143–4 below.
246 See Chs. 3–4 below.
247 See 117; 128ff., 147ff–7 below.
249 See Epp. 45; 66.13–14; 40.
251 Richard Saller, Personal Patronage under the Early Empire (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), 11.
252 Konstan, Friendship in the Classical World, 145.
status in his depiction of Virro’s dinner party where Trebius considered himself *amicus* to Virro, but the slaves insult him, since their master values them more highly.253 Although patronage, unlike friendship, was undefined, society understood its machinery and manipulated it.254 Perhaps Jerome never ate with his women, lest his rank be irrevocably fixed.255

Konstan mentions a hardening of hierarchy by the fourth and fifth centuries with the settlement of immigrant tribes within the borders and resulting confusion of rank.256 The senatorial class, zealously securing their order, conferred the status of *amicus* on others, passing money down ‘to ensure their subordinate dignity and conformity with their wishes’.257 True *amicitia* could take place, provided one’s property ranking was sufficient.258 *Amicitia* in the senatorial class was generally based on shared political aspirations and alliances cemented by intermarriage, so that wealth was maintained within well-defined family parameters, and *arrivistes* excluded.259 In the political arena, Cicero also expressed the hard-headed belief that friendship was based on what was mutually beneficial.260

Other changes in the understanding of friendship occurred in Late Antiquity. Christian writers, especially Jerome and Augustine, tend to replace *amicitia* with *caritas*. Christians preferred kinship terms. Jerome employed *paterfamilias* to stake his claim to episcopal-like authority.261 Status within patronage became ambiguous. Women of the *nobilitas* had wealth, rank and influence but were excluded from elitist schooling. They conferred on Jerome the status of mentor. His educational background of an elite male, but one who lacked rank, led to the ‘contestatory’ nature of the relationship. Most investigations of classical friendship focus on Greek ideals but Craig Williams’ scholarly work redresses the balance, pointing out that Romans placed greater emphasis on friendship as an ideal.262 Williams queries Derrida’s assertion that women were

254 Verboven, “Friendship among the Romans,” 413.
255 See Jerome, *Ep.* 45.3.
258 Ibid.
259 Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 95.
261 See 72; 207ff. below.
excluded from any understanding of friendship in the ancient world. However, describing friendship with women was fraught with problems, especially for Jerome. *Amica* bore the connotation of a sexual partner. Cicero famously insulted Clodia as ‘amica omnium’.

Ovid suggested feigned friendship as a ploy for seduction. When Lesbia rejected Catullus he pleaded that they may enjoy ‘aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae’ (‘this eternal bond of sacred friendship’). Pliny avoids the problem by including Fannia in a mixed group of *amici*. It seems men and women could have friendship, without the designation of ‘friends’.

Jerome’s contentiousness affected his relationships with other scholars. Brown claims that Jerome ‘deliberately turned from his male colleagues, with ill-disguised contempt, in order to lavish his erudition on the devoted women of the Roman Church’. Konstan, in an examination of Ambrose’s *De officiis ministerum*, identifies the importance of self-disclosure, not in the classical sense for self-improvement, by listening to the criticism of one’s friends, but as a form of self-abasement. Christians had a shared vision of life that rendered them all helpless without God’s grace. It was in keeping with Jerome’s understanding of Christian humility to ‘sacrifice’ his gifts by seeking to make women his friends.

**Pliny and Jerome – A Comparison**

Drawing on Adrian Sherwin-White, Jacqueline Carlon argues that Pliny devoted effort to the artful construction and arrangement of his letters. Publication was accepted as a way of displaying the author’s status through his social network and literary talent. Pliny was accused of exaggerating the extent of his friendships, and therefore his status. His desire for fame is explicit: ‘Mihi nisi præmium aeternitatis ante oculos pingue illud altumque otium placeat’ (‘Were it not for the prize of immortality before

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263 Ibid., 60.
265 Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 719–22 suggests that women did have hopes of friendship with men.
my eyes, that life of rich and abounding ease would please me’). Horace also reflects this desire for epistolary immortality, playfully tracing the future of his book of letters as a school text.

Jerome employed letters to display his literary ability, influence and his powerful connections. Yet, a comparison between the urbane, pagan governor of a Roman province and the acerbic, scholarly monk may seem unlikely. The memory of the glory days of the republic still gripped the political imagination of Pliny’s class. In Jerome’s lifetime, the republic was a distant memory, though the senatorial class still maintained a sense of moral and civic superiority. Nevertheless, Pliny and Jerome had much in common. Dependent on patronage, self-promotion and outstanding ability to make their way in Rome, both demonstrate in their writing the influence of the same conservative, elitist education that changed little from the first to the sixth century, where:

The broad and deep reach of rhetoric as a discursive system, borne out by its endurance over time, suggests that its replication of a civic ideal played a major role in making sense of what it meant to be Roman.

Carlon identifies Pliny’s difficulty thus:

How could a member of the Roman elite in the second century achieve lasting fame, when the old republican legislative process in the Senate, including the holding of the consulship had lost republican meaning?

Even military glory must be shared with the emperor. In Carlon’s view, Pliny sought renown in carefully portraying how a Roman of his class conducted himself with ‘moral rectitude’, especially within the family, a microcosm of the wider community. Carlon draws heavily on Paul Veyne’s argument that the Republic, with its fiercely competitive, feudal customs and clan structures, gave way, under imperial rule, to the

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272 Pliny, Ep. 9.3.1.
274 Julian the Apostate’s rule, notwithstanding. For the senatorial sense of elitism, see Brown, “The Patrons of Pelagius,” 56–72.
275 Kaster, Guardians of Language, 24.
276 Connolly, “Rhetorical Education,” 114.
277 Carlon, Pliny’s Women, 2.
278 Pliny the Elder turned his attention to literary pursuits when his military successes went unacknowledged under Nero.
279 Carlon, Pliny’s Women, 2. In addition, Pliny sought to represent himself as the model friend and patron, family man, litteratus and confidante of the great. See Hoffer, The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger.
emergence of ‘une aristocratie de service’. Veyne links that change to the development of conjugal morality. Having lost the power to act or think independently in respect of his clan, the new imperial functionary ‘cultive la respectibilité’, in monogamous, heterosexual relations. Carlon accepts Veyne’s neat dichotomy to explain Pliny’s concentration on the well-regulated family and the role of women. However, Suzanne Dixon, substantiating her argument by reference to Plutarch and Statius, claims that, by the first century BCE, men and women already expected mutuality of affection in marriage. Further, Nathan submits that the Anicii, inter alios, assembled ‘an agglomeration of related families like the old gens’, suggesting clan loyalties never quite died. We see that women’s behaviour, as an indicator of their husband’s right to office, was always a Roman societal norm. They had always been expected to live in concordia with their husband’s reputation and aspirations. In Jerome’s case, his women lived in concordia with Jesus, but Jerome accrued glory as the one who showed them the way.

The Roman nobilitas was central to the ambitions of both letter writers. Pliny’s letters shape a world different from the harsh judgments of his near contemporary, Tacitus. Pliny’s work suggests that ‘Rome was never more full of noble men and virtuous women than during his lifetime’. Even the terrors of Domitian’s rule are muted. Pliny presents an exemplum of how the cultivated man of moderation and circumspect wisdom can emerge a hero.

Rome also lay at the heart of Jerome’s ambitions. He saw himself as the architect of a transformed Rome, starting with the nobilitas – in Symmachus’ words, ‘pars melior

281 Ibid., 35.
285 For its function, see Nathan, The Family in Late Antiquity, 126.
287 Gunhild Vidén, Women in Roman Literature (Goteborg: Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1993), 91. Hoffer suggests ‘he protests too much’ in Hoffer, The Anxieties of Pliny the Younger, 1
generis humani’ (‘the better part of the human race’).\textsuperscript{289} Rebenich argues that Jerome did not challenge this view of the Roman aristocrats but rather ‘propagated a new, Christian concept of nobility that was not based upon illustrious ancestry but upon ascetic perfection.’\textsuperscript{290} However, this thesis argues that Jerome’s aim was to transform all society beginning with the nobilitas. Instead of expending money on public works for the benefactor’s glory, rich Christians were to follow Christ’s words in Matthew 19.21:

If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.\textsuperscript{291}

A new family order would emerge. Old systems such as patronage would continue, but they would instead finance Christian scholarship and the relief of the poor; – the former took priority in Jerome’s mind. The poor were generally a rhetorical construct in late antiquity, with the rich hanging on to their money.\textsuperscript{292} However, the Scriptural imperative remained that poverty should be relieved. Jerome wanted Fabiola’s money to support his scholarship but he also commends her for building a hospital for the poor.\textsuperscript{293} Women, too, are a rhetorical construct in late antiquity but, while Jerome ‘wrote’ women, he includes them in his new reality and the same might be said for the poor.

Jerome had promoted himself as an exemplum of ascetic living.\textsuperscript{294} He demonstrates humility for – though he is a Roman litteratus, classically educated and rhetorically gifted – he submits to the rigours of exegeting one uncouth, and another barbarically expressed language of Scripture in order to display his devotion to Christ.\textsuperscript{295} In exhibiting his learnedness and rhetorical skill in the familiar letter, he throws into relief his persona of scriptor de scripturis where ‘he conceived an entire “anti-literature” based on Scripture,’ that comprised translation, exegesis and commentary:

Commentary, as Jerome announces it, is less a genre than a job (‘opus commentariorum’), a literary activity subordinate to the Bible as a
signifying whole, one which claims neither style nor artistic unity of its own. Any writing that would count as ‘Christian literature’ in Jerome’s book had to be of a piece with the Bible itself.²⁹⁶

The similarity of the shared characteristics in the employment of letters by Pliny and Jerome testifies to the conservatism of Roman society and the continuation of classical epistolary practices into the period of Christian hegemony. Williams’ comment is relevant to this thesis: ‘innovation is always apposite, though it must manipulate the terms of the existing cultural repertoire in order to be comprehensible.’²⁹⁷ Jerome contextualised his promotion of asceticism and scholarship to women by employing every possible epistolary genre in his familial letters to reinterpret some of the norms of Roman society.²⁹⁸

Pliny and Jerome are distinguished by the extent of their correspondence with women of the senatorial class: about one tenth of Pliny’s letters were written to women (though he referred to other women) and over one third of Jerome’s.²⁹⁹ This chapter will concentrate on how both men used women in the construction of a persona. Pliny sought to present himself as the ideal Roman of his class; Jerome attempts to modify the discourse of Roman society and to recast the role of women in late antiquity through an ascetic paradigm. Jerome embraced, adapted and reinterpreted traditional practices present in Roman society that Pliny exemplifies.

The Thesis and Its Development

Through the ages, there has been no shortage of identities imputed to Jerome. Jerome represented himself as martyr-saint, biblical scholar, translator of Scripture and ascetic mentor. Contemporary scholarship, more critical, has seen first-wave feminists attack the misogyny of his texts.³⁰⁰ While generally accepting Cain’s thesis that Jerome employs his letters to women to promote a persona of the ascetic mentor and scholar extraordinaire and his controversial commitment to veritas Hebraica in his translation and exegesis, I will identify other personae.³⁰¹ While the above scholars bring valuable insights to Jerome’s letters, this thesis attempts to show that their focus has distorted a

²⁹⁸ See Ch. 3 below.
²⁹⁹ Cicero wrote principally to the women of his family and to Caerellia, a woman of philosophical interests. See Jon Hall, Politeness and Politics in Cicero’s Letters (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 24.
³⁰⁰ See 23ff. above.
³⁰¹ See Ch. 2 below.
more complex understanding of Jerome’s purposes, his attitude to women and their agency.

This thesis proposes a new identity for Jerome as the architect of a socio-political and ecclesial discourse, preparing for the second advent of Jesus where, based on an attempted biblical theology, the social norms of marriage, wealth distribution, friendship, gender relations, patronage and rhetoric were transmutted to construct a society whose members lived ‘as the angels’. This vision would be reformulated to encompass not only the vicissitudes of his own life, but also the changing landscape of the Roman Empire.

Jerome’s misogyny is seen as a contextualised strategy appealing to the sense of elitism in the nobilitas through satire. Moreover, in his relationship with Paula, he aimed to model how men and women would live in an Eden-like relationship. Jerome was not the first to advocate education for women but he did not differentiate between men and women in his response to their questions, offering a rigorous intellectual basis for ascetic praxis.302 His discourse promised women a life independent of the interests of the clan; a fame that had hitherto been the prerogative of their male relatives, the intellectual status of philosophers and deliverance from the judgment of the Fall. He expanded the role of Mary as Eve, the head of a new celibate race of women in the image of God. Audaciously reformulating the works of the classical authors, he rewrote the most insignificant member of the nobilitas hierarchy, the unmarried girl, in terms of the Aeneid, as the hero and pioneer of a new Rome.

By applying Spiegel’s ‘social logic’, particularly to patronage, this thesis challenges the poststructuralist notion that nothing can be known of the agency of either women or writers in late antiquity.303 Jerome’s correspondents shaped Jerome’s writing through his dependence on them. Jerome aspired to friendship with women beyond the conventions of patronage but was often rebuffed. I suggest that the women were powerful agents for the ascetic discourse and selective in what they adopted. Further, Jerome’s dependence on these women and the fragile political state of the Empire led to Jerome’s final persona as a quasi-bishop to the scholarly widows of Gaul. Times were

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303 See 162–8 below.
too uncertain to hope for a new Golden Age, and ‘the Eusebian vision of the kingdom of God coming in through the nexus of Church and Empire was shattered in 410’.  

In Chapter 2, we investigate how Jacqueline Carlon’s work on Pliny can provide a heuristic tool for exploring how Jerome, too, sought to establish a reputation among the great of Rome through letters to women. As *novus homo*, each man sought to establish himself as the paradigm for a life well lived in Roman society. Jerome, however, sought to transform the Roman understanding of the family in terms of the new ascetic Christian dispensation, while maintaining the old categories. Both men used their association with high-ranking women to purge their pasts; to present negative *exempla* of meretricious feminine behaviour, and to establish themselves as the ideal *paterfamilias*, displacing other males. I have adopted Pliny’s taxonomy of a *cursus honorum* for women, namely, betrothed, matron and widow to explore Jerome’s reinterpretation of women’s roles, the benefits they received from his mentoring and the agency of the women, themselves.

Chapter 3 begins to investigate the first stage of this feminine *cursus honorum* by examining *Epistula* 22 where, I argue, Jerome represented Eustochium as the archetypal betrothed for a new Rome. In exegeting this letter, I critique Cox Miller’s application of literary theory that confines the letter to an expression of Jerome’s attempt to deal with female sexuality and thus diminishes Jerome’s socio-political, ecclesial and eschatological purposes. Eustochium was to be the Aeneas-like pioneer of a new Roman order where her ‘holy arrogance’ represented an inversion of the old Roman values. Young women would displace their married sisters and even the male heroes of Rome in honour. In embracing the doctrine of the Virgin Mary, as the recapitulation of Eve, he aimed to liberate celibate women from legacy of the Fall: the curse of childbirth, male dominion, and the impairment of their intellectual capabilities. Further, Jerome sought to demonstrate his humility by describing his spiritual longings in terms of the lowliest member of the aristocratic hierarchy. In an exuberant advertisement of his scholarship and prophetic persona, he offered an alternative life-path, glory in the new Rome, affirmation of women’s desire to learn and a Scriptural defence of virginity founded on Mary. Jerome’s eschatological focus of ‘living as the angels’, in anticipation of the resurrection, underpins his understanding of the new Rome.

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305 Carlon, *Pliny’s Women*.
In Chapter 4, we meet another betrothed Demetrias, in the context of a dominant clan that was controlled by powerful women. I address the problem of ‘men writing women’ by adopting Spiegel’s theory of ‘social logic’. An investigation of the history of ill-feeling towards the clan by Jerome and the impact of patronage, especially in the content of theological controversy, provides fresh insights into the agency of the women in shaping Jerome’s texts. By writing, in Virgilian tropes, all three Anician women into his grand design for an ascetic Rome, he transmutes the society of the classical past with its literature and societal norms of wealth distribution, gender, status and glory in terms of the ascetic ideal. An examination of epigraphic and literary evidence supports interpretations about the women, their power and capacity for independent action.

An attempt to resolve the dissonance between the savagery of Jerome’s satire against some women and the warmth Jerome showed to the women of his circle introduces Chapter 5. The question arises as to whether or not women achieve Jerome’s approval at the cost of their femininity. I contend that Jerome presented ascetic women as both classical philosophers and Christian scholars, in that their learning and lives were in accord. Taking up Averil Cameron’s argument that Christianity comprised competing discourses, I propose that Jerome drew on the cultural plot of classical misogynistic texts to overthrow the norm of marriage in order to rescue women. Further, I propose that in Bethlehem, he modelled with Paula an Eden-like state where men and women could live as the Holy Family, without sexual intimacy, thus presaging heaven.

Pliny celebrated the widows who protected their husbands’ gloria by refusing to remarry. In Chapter 6, I submit that Jerome contextualised asceticism within a Roman value system by linking celibacy to the labour of biblical scholarship, distinguishing his widows as philosophers. While needing their support to finance his extraordinary output of work, he also desired friendship with widows. However, his widows exhibited independence in what they accepted from his attempts to fashion them, as in the case of the Aniciae and Marcella. In later life, Jerome turned his attention to the widows of the Empire, especially Gaul. His letters indicate a movement towards a quasi-episcopal

308 See the opening to the letter to Asella, 1–3 above.
authority, mellow in tone and emphasising pastoral concern amidst the perils of barbarian invasions.

By means of examining the rhetorical strategies employed in the letters relating to each classification of women, I argue that Jerome sought to reinterpret Rome’s cultural plots in terms of his own ascetic vision for Rome demonstrating both continuity and discontinuity with the past.
Chapter 2: Letter Writing and the Making of a Persona

In the previous chapter, Jerome was located within the company of great letter writers in Roman antiquity. Like Cicero and Pliny, he was a novus homo who used his letters to create a persona that would redound to his gloria. Jon Hall provides a comprehensive analysis of Cicero’s use of politeness in his letters even as ‘a deliberate and calculated show of aggression’ to preserve his own reputation.1 Jerome’s letters show the influence of both Cicero and Pliny, whom he regarded as paragons of style.2 H. Hagendahl observed that had not Cicero’s work survived, the possibility of detecting its scope was present in Jerome’s citations.3 Neil Adkin argues cogently that Jerome had already accessed Pliny when he began his epistolary career in the 370s, quoting Jerome’s own testimony.4 While taking into account significant differences, a comparison between Jerome and Pliny to connect Jerome to the classical epistolographic tradition and elaborate may be productive.

A Framework of Comparison

Jacqueline Carlon’s thorough investigation of Pliny’s prosopographical and historical background identifies five categories covering either the female recipients of Pliny’s letters or women mentioned.5 The first women encountered were related to the ‘Stoic opposition’ during the principates of Nero, Vespasian and Domitian.6 Pliny constructs a close relationship with them to live down indiscretions of the past. The second category concerns women related to Pliny’s patron, Corellius Rufus.7 Pliny uses them to renegotiate his status. The third category comprises women involved in disputes over testaments, affording Pliny the chance to ‘display his moral convictions’ and to supplant inadequate male relations.8 The fourth group, constructing the ideal wife, consists of the betrothed, the young wife and the mature matron/widow – a cursus honorum for

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2 Jerome, Ep. 22.30.
5 Jacqueline M. Carlon, Pliny’s Women: Constructing Virtue and Creating Identity in the Roman World (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 14
6 Ibid., 64.
7 Ibid., 76.
8 Ibid., 16.
women. The final group exemplify women whose behaviour is to be avoided. It is in ‘whatever way women contribute to Pliny’s image that defines their importance to the letters, and thus an understanding of Pliny’s self-representation must underlie any consideration of the women therein’.

I will employ Carlon’s categories heuristically to examine how Jerome wrote women to his advantage. In succeeding chapters, the focus shifts to Carlon’s *cursus honorum* for women as a framework for examining Jerome’s socio-political and ecclesial vision, while assessing how much agency women exercised.

**Women and living down the past**

**Pliny: ‘Enemy of Tyrants’**

Carlon argues that Pliny needs to purge his past and reshape his future. Having benefitted from Domitian’s favour in his progression through the *cursus honorum*, he revises the past through letters, either to, or about, the female relatives of those executed and exiled. The connection with these women implies *amicitia* with the heroes of the anti-Domitian movement, especially Rusticus and Helvidius.

In a letter to a friend, Pliny expresses concern over the health of Fannia, the widow of Helvidius, implying a close association with her and, by extension, her famous husband and her heroic antecedents, the Ariae and Thrasea. By lauding the exemplary nature of Fannia’s devotion to her husband’s reputation, Pliny is able to insinuate himself into the events of the past:

> Habuerunt officia mea in secundis, habuerunt in adversis. Ego solacium relegatarum, ego ultor reversarum.

(They were in possession of my services in prosperity; they had them in adversity. I was the comfort of the exiles; I was the avenger on the reinstated.)

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9 Carlon, *Pliny’s Women*, 139.
10 Ibid., 12.
11 Ibid., 13.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
Fannia rescued her husband’s diaries, when the senate, ‘ex necessitate et metu temporum’ (‘out of necessity and fear of the times’), ordered them to be destroyed. In defiance of Domitian, she took the diaries into exile with her.\(^\text{15}\) The political dimension is muted, because Pliny is now a functionary of the Emperor Trajan, as the *Panegyricus* proclaims.\(^\text{16}\) Since some senators involved are still living, he mitigates their behaviour. Pliny claims that Fannia’s death will be like losing her mother, Caecina Aria all over again; the adroit inclusion of Fannia’s mother links Pliny not only with her own heroism but with her husband’s opposition to tyranny. Fannia and her mother were defended by Pliny, so he, too, by association may be numbered among the heroes.\(^\text{17}\)

**Jerome as Enemy of Heresy**

Just as Pliny used women to cast himself as the enemy of tyrants, so Jerome creates a persona as the enemy of heresy.\(^\text{18}\) The past that Jerome sought to live down was his early dependence on the writings of Origen.\(^\text{19}\) His translation of Origen’s *Homilies on the Song of Songs* underpinned Jerome’s treatise, *De virginitate*.\(^\text{20}\) Jerome also followed Origen in his belief that ‘spiritual’ persons live as if unconstrained by the dangers of the body.\(^\text{21}\) On the condemnation of Origen’s writings, Jerome sought to justify his position by comparing the books of Origen to the works of Jerome’s teacher, Apollinaris of Laodicea (310–390) and other writers whose works were unacceptable to the Church\(^\text{22}\):

> Non quo omnia dicam esse damnanda quae in illorum voluminibus continentur, sed quo quaedam reprehendenda confitear.

\(^\text{17}\) For a complete analysis of this letter, see Carlon, *Pliny’s Women*, 52–8. I have summarised the text, indicating any departure from Carlon.
\(^\text{18}\) Apollinaris had been Jerome’s teacher and receives a eulogy in *de vir, illus*.
\(^\text{19}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 32.4. See 9ff. above.
\(^\text{21}\) Brown, *The Body and Society*, 373. In practice, Jerome believed only he was capable of such friendship.
\(^\text{22}\) Apollinaris’ teachings, in opposition to Arius, that Christ’s human soul was replaced by the divine *logos* were strongly opposed by Gregory Nazianzus in *Letter* 101 and criticised at the Council of Constantinople in 381. See Alistair E. McGrath, *Historical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 53.
(I shall not go so far as to say that everything contained in the books of those men must be condemned but confess that there are certain parts which ought to be censured.)

Thus Jerome sought to retain Origen’s exegetical methodology but condemn his *On First Principles*, because of its speculation on the Judgment and the resurrection. However, Yves-Marie Duval shows how elements of Origen’s theology of the state of the Christian soul after death forced Jerome, the exegete, uncharacteristically to think philosophically and theologically in his *consolatio* for Blesilla. The maintenance of an orthodox reputation was essential for Jerome because of its nexus with the Church’s teaching on morality. There is a diminution of Jerome’s concern to distance himself from Origen’s theology after 398, but Jerome continues to employ accusations of Origenism in his polemical arsenal.

To reinforce his reputation for orthodoxy, Jerome employed two *consolationes*, written on the deaths of his most illustrious patrons, Paula and Marcella. These women, of rank and commendable Christian character, served to proclaim not only Jerome’s orthodoxy but his role in their scholarly reputation and piety. The *consolatio* could be employed not only as a panegyric. Andrew Cain demonstrates that the *consolatio* to Paula’s daughter Eustochium is actually ‘the textual basis for a Bethlehem-centred cult of Paula, the ascetic martyr-saint.’ Just as Pliny insinuated himself into the history of the sick Fannia, Jerome places himself in a position of incontestable orthodoxy, as the companion of a saint. For twenty years, Paula has been his learned amanuensis and ruler of the female monastery. He portrays Paula as the quintessential Holy Land pilgrim, rich aristocrat, philanthropist, scholar and chaste widow.

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He opens with a Homeric τόπος which typically portrayed celibate women as heroic, but Paula’s heroism is expressed in qualities advocated in his asceticism, especially the renunciation of wealth.\(^{27}\)

> Si cuncta mei corporis membra verterentur in linguas, et omnes artus humana voce resonarent, nihil dignum sanctae ac venerabilis Paulae virtutibus dicerem. Nobilis genere, sed multo nobilior sanctitate; potens quondam divitiis, sed nunc Christi paupertate insignior.

(If all the members of my body were to be converted into tongues, and if each of my limbs were to sound out with a human voice, I would not say anything worthy of the merits of the saintly and venerable Paula. Noble by descent, nobler still in sanctity; once influential through her wealth, now she is more distinguished by the poverty of Christ.)\(^{28}\)

Her sanctity is confirmed by her vision in the grotto at Bethlehem where the incarnation history unfolds before her eyes.\(^{29}\) Frances Cardman calls this ‘sacramental imagination’ when, the pilgrim who ‘is caught up in the sense of place can experience its significance with a new degree of vividness’.\(^{30}\)

Paula displayed her scholarship and piety as ready quotes from the Scriptures, especially Isaiah, came to her lips. Her commitment to learning Hebrew is implied in the reference to Bethlehem as the ‘House of Bread’ and her play on words that ‘she dwelt in the tents of Kedar’ — ‘Kedar’ meaning ‘darkness’.\(^{31}\) Her reputation for piety and learning thus secured, Jerome inserts a theological altercatio with an Origenist heretic, in which he sees off the Origenist after Paula is located as the defender of orthodoxy, as in a vita.\(^{32}\)


\(^{28}\) Jerome, Ep. 108.1. Jerome’s agenda does not render his grief any less real.

\(^{29}\) Jerome, Ep. 108.10.


\(^{31}\) Jerome, Ep. 108.1; See Ps. 121.2.

\(^{32}\) Cain, Jerome’s Epitaph on Paula, 402–3; see also Jerome, Ep. 108.23.
Tangam ergo breviter quomodo hereticorum caenosos devitaverit lacus, et eos instar habuerit ethnicorum. Quidam veterator callidus, atque, ut sibi videbatur, doctus ac sciolus, me nesciente coepit ei proponere quaestiones, et dicere: “Quid peccavit infans, ut a daemone corripiatur?”

(I must, therefore, briefly touch on how she avoided the filthy lairs of the heretics, those whom she would have considered of the same ilk as the pagans. A certain, slimy character, in his own view both learned and clever, began without my knowing to pose questions to her, saying: “What sin has an infant committed that it should be snatched away by the devil?”)[33][34]

Jerome’s persona, not only of a defender of orthodoxy, but also a protector of a saint, is confirmed in a similar way to Pliny’s representation of himself as the ‘avenger’ of Fannia and her mother. Jerome’s interpolation of dialogue brings a theatrical quality to his writing.

Jerome’s *consolatio* to Principia on the death of Marcella establishes his orthodoxy in a similar way. Once more, he establishes his patron’s worldly pedigree, emphasising ‘the true nobility of poverty and lowliness’ that proclaimed her piety. Exaggerating his own importance by saying: ‘Denique, cum et me Romam cum sanctis pontificibus, Paulino et Epiphaniio ecclesiastica traxisset necessitas’ (‘when the needs of the Church at length drew me to Rome in the company of the holy pontiffs, Paulinus and Epiphanius’), he claims Marcella sought him out for his scholarly reputation.[35] The reader’s attention is directed to several decades later when Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *On First Principles* reached Rome:

> In hac tranquillitate et Domini servitute, heretica in provinciis exorta tempestas cuncta turbavit … navem plenam blasphemiarum Romano intulit portui … Tunc librorum περὶ Ἀρχῶν infamis interpretation … tunc nostrorum διάπυρος contradictio, et Pharisaerorum turbata schola. Tunc sancta Marcella, quae diu coniverat, ne per aemulationem quippiam facere crederetur, postquam sensit fidem apostolico ore laudatam, in plerisque violari, ita ut sacerdotes quoque, et nonullos monachorum,

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33. This is an Origenist reference to the pre-existence of the soul where demon-possessed children were deemed to have sinned before birth. See Cain, *Jerome’s Epitaph on Paula*, 405.


maximeque saeculi homines, in adsensum sui traheret hereticus; ac simplicitati inluderet Episcopi, qui de suo ingenio ceteros aestimabat, publice restitit, malens Deo placere, quam hominibus.

(While we were serving the Lord in tranquillity, there arose in these provinces a storm of heresy which threw everything into confusion … then it introduced a ship laden with blasphemies into the port of Rome itself. ... Next came the notorious interpretation of the book On First Principles … Next there was the fiery confutation by my supporters, and the school of the Pharisees was thrown into confusion. Up till then the saintly Marcella had long held back lest she should be thought merely to act from rivalry. But when she saw that the faith once validated by the lips of the Apostle was being violated for many in such a way that this heretic was drawing to his side even the priests and some of the monks, and especially laity and mocked the simplicity of the bishop, who considered the rest were of his disposition, she made a public stand, choosing to please God rather than men.)

The formidable Marcella, Jerome’s student, is represented as single-handedly saving a Rome that was wavering on the brink of heresy. Jerome shares the glory as her theological mentor and sheds any suggestion of sympathy for Origen’s theological speculation. Association with such women enhances Jerome’s reputation but also reveals Jerome’s belief in the intellectual and moral capabilities of women and his commitment to their education.

**Clients and Patrons**

**Pliny the Model Protégé**

Pliny was the protégé of Q. Corellius Rufus who supported him ‘petendis honoribus’ (‘in seeking political advancement’), but Corellius was not an opponent of Domitian. To avoid any distraction from his self-representation as heroic opponent, Pliny intersperses,

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37 Marcella’s support of Jerome and also her independence is revisited below, see 216–22.
throughout his collection, letters honouring his mentor with letters to the women of the Stoic opposition or with examples of his own bravery.\(^{38}\)

He claims Corellius’ wife, Hispulla, and his daughter send for him to dissuade Corellius from suicide by starvation, thereby indicating the intimacy of his connection with the family.\(^{39}\) His letters to them illustrate that between friends, ‘the letter exchange was about status management’.\(^{40}\) Later, Pliny writes to Corellia Hispulla, recommending a tutor for her son.\(^{41}\) He represents himself admirably, dutifully extolling the part her father played in his own character formation, at the same time setting forth the educational requirements appropriate for a child with such illustrious antecedents. In this way, he honours Corellia’s well-connected husband and implies an association. On another occasion, he defends Corellia Hispulla in a case brought against her by the consul elect, Caecilius; though the latter is an *amicus* of Pliny, his obligations to the deceased Corellius take precedence. No mention is made of Corellia Hispulla’s own character; rather the letter becomes the opportunity for a panegyric on Corellius and a reflection of Pliny’s fulfilment of obligation.\(^{42}\)

Corellius’ sister is included in the bonds of *amicitia* with Corellius. Pliny sells her land below the market price, even though his heirs will be disadvantaged. Corellia seeks to pay the taxable price but Pliny rejects the offer.\(^{43}\) In the delicate game of *amicitia*, Pliny places Corellia under obligation, by selling more cheaply, while at the same time appearing to be magnanimous. Corellia offers the full price to pre-empt any obligation.\(^{44}\)

Although the Corelliae exercised considerable authority in family decisions and financial negotiations, Carlon suggests that it is unlikely that this ‘friendship’ would have existed, had not the bonds already existed with male relations.\(^{45}\) Pliny sought to build on male *amicitia* by using the connection with Corellia Hispulla to imply association with her well-connected husband and son. The women provide the opportunity for him to show himself as a dutiful protégé but he simultaneously banishes

\(^{38}\) Carlon, *Pliny’s Women*, 97; see also Pliny, *Ep.* 3.11.


\(^{41}\) Pliny, *Ep.* 3.3.


any suggestion of inferiority by his adroit handling of the sale of the land and his self-
representation as a son upon whom the women call. Unlike Jerome, he is not satisfied
with his connection to the women themselves.

**Jerome the Client-Mentor**

Pliny’s correspondence illustrates that letters were particularly suited for the ‘bridging a
gap’ of status.\(^{46}\) Ambiguity in relationships was compounded by the fact that Jerome’s
patrons had rank and wealth, while he had authority as a teacher, a role denied to them.
However, the tension generated when the pupil was of a higher social rank than the
mentor was not new. Jerome had as a model the letters between Marcus Aurelius and
Fronto, where the gap was bridged by their shared interest in philosophy (and
hypochondria) and because the socially superior, Marcus Aurelius, condescended to it.\(^{47}\)
Jerome sought to assert his own ‘patronage’ of the women by virtue of his authority as a
male, a priest and a scholar.\(^{48}\)

Jerome’s *superbia sancta* appealed to senatorial sense of self-worth. This pride
emanated from the rejection of worldly values by surrendering all for the sake of Christ
in the expectation of a different *gloria*.\(^{49}\) This inversion of values is demonstrated in
Jerome’s eulogy for Lea, who had founded the first enclosed community for women in
Rome. She died on the same day as the eminent pagan, the consul elect, Vettius Agorius
Praetextatus.\(^{50}\) But while she enjoys the blessings of heaven, Jerome portrays the
consul, like Dives, as in hell, pleading for a drop of water from the Lazarus-like Lea.\(^{51}\)
Nevertheless, Roman customs died hard. Jerome observed the conventions when he
could turn them to his own advantage. The status gap could be narrowed through the
sharing of past experiences, especially emotional ones.\(^{52}\) Jerome reminds Marcella that
they were studying together when news came of Lea’s death.\(^{53}\) His suggestion of an
intimacy in a shared grief places him above the status of a mere tutor.

\(^{46}\) See 30 above.
\(^{47}\) M. Cornelius Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem* 5.55, in *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology with
\(^{48}\) See 56, 58,147ff.; 229ff. below
\(^{49}\) For the development of Augustine’s views, see R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity
\(^{50}\) Duval describes him as ‘le chef moral du paganisme romain’ in Yves-Marie Duval, “Sur trois lettres
méconnues de Jérôme concernant son séjour à Rome,” in *Jerome of Stridon*, ed. Andrew Cain and
Josef Lössl (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 5.
\(^{52}\) Trapp, *Greek and Latin Letters*, 39.
Cain points out that in a letter to Asella, Jerome describes her life in terms of the precepts already set out in his letter to Eustochium. In so doing, ‘he subtly assumes responsibility for her monastic successes and gives the misleading impression that her accomplishments are directly attributable to his counsel’. This is not quite fair. Jerome never claimed to be an evangelist for virginity, but rather the best guide for those who had already made the commitment. While Jerome shows that this woman lives in accord with his precepts, her reputation is also enhanced by publishing her devotion. Jerome’s description of Asella’s life is a model for priests as well as the young virgins of Marcella’s circle: ‘Viduae imitentur et virgines, maritae colant, noxiae timeant, suscipiant sacerdotes’ (‘Let widows and virgins imitate her, let married women revere her, let guilty women fear her and let priests defend her’). ‘Suscipiant sacerdotes’ is used advisedly because Jerome had enemies among the clergy. Jerome is suggesting that, if this exemplary woman is worthy of defence, so is her mentor. With this letter already in circulation, it is not surprising, then, that Jerome wrote to Asella on his banishment.

Whereas Pliny’s amicitia with women was predicated on their relationship to a significant male patron or mentor, Jerome sought to detach women from any male authority and make himself the male reference point in their lives. But Jerome was dependent on patronage to provide for his scholarly pursuits, not least because manuscripts were expensive.

The claim for amicitia with his female patrons lay primarily in Jerome’s capacity to deliver authoritative commentary on the Scripture and a blueprint for asceticism. He, therefore, lived with the constant pressure of maintaining this persona – a situation pointing to the agency of the women. More than half of the letters addressed to women deal almost exclusively with questions of scholarship. The majority are addressed to Marcella in the quaestiones et responsiones form. Two describe appropriate training for little girls destined for the same future.

54 See Jerome, Ep. 24.5.
56 Jerome, Ep. 130.19.
57 Jerome, Ep. 23.1, 5.
58 See Jerome, Epp. 22.16; 53.7
59 See 30 above.
60 Jerome, Epp. 107, 128.
In the subtle world of *amicitia* with its expectations of *quid pro quo*, Jerome commits himself to a particular group of noble women. Like Pliny, Jerome presents himself as their benefactor in placing his skills at their disposal. Yet he is not able entirely to shed the conventions. He needed the support of these women to survive the accusations and controversies of his turbulent career. But he manages to compose his letters in such a way as to present himself as the authoritative voice of asceticism and the one best able to fulfil their aspirations for learning.

**The Model Paterfamilias**

Pliny and Jerome both lacked female relations. Pliny’s mother had died in his youth. Nevertheless, he crafts a role of *paterfamilias* with his wife’s relations and by ‘assuming the places of deceased or ineffective men in the lives of various women’.\(^{61}\) Jerome mentions only his grandmother, sister and a disaffected maternal aunt.\(^{62}\) But he sets himself up as a *paterfamilias* not only to the original Aventine group but eventually as a quasi-bishop to all women who seek the ascetic life, recognising no male authority but his own over the women of his circle.

**Pliny: Champion of the Vulnerable**

In his role of exemplary citizen, it was necessary for Pliny to exhibit *pietas* towards family members and dependents through his care of them.\(^{63}\) His ‘legacy letters serve to extend Pliny’s integrity in his interactions with women all the way to the imperial court’.\(^{64}\) Pliny’s forensic skills were his claim to fame on the public stage and also as the protector of his circle.

Pomponia Galla disinherited her son and, since Pliny was named as an heir, he must show himself to be acting with integrity.\(^{65}\) Pliny assumes the role the protector of her interests, refusing to subvert the terms of the will.\(^{66}\) Eventually, he brokers compensation for the son, thus showing both integrity towards the wishes of the deceased, and also justice to the disinherit.\(^{67}\) As a reward for Pliny’s integrity, the son

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\(^{64}\) Ibid.

\(^{65}\) Pliny, *Ep.* 5.1.1.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.
leaves him a legacy. In similar vein, Pliny fulfils the testamentary wishes of a certain Sabina by freeing her slave and providing a legacy, although this is to Pliny’s disadvantage and not legally binding. Women, however self-reliant, need the intervention of a male like Pliny to reinterpret their wishes in terms of the male domain of justice. Pliny contrasts the integrity and protective nature of his actions with that of his rival Regulus, an unscrupulous legacy hunter.

In providing for Calvina, his adfinis (kinswoman) whose father had left her with debts, Pliny shows ‘proper restraint and appropriate liberality’. The father’s name is not mentioned, so Pliny appropriates the fama which the father does not deserve and becomes a model paterfamilias.

Jerome, the Paterfamilias

If legacy-hunting and preying on rich women had proved popular in the early principate, it was taken up with equal enthusiasm by some Christians. Jerome refers to the edict of Valentinian to deal with captatores (extortioners):

Pudet dicere: sacerdotes idolorum, mimi et aurigae et scorta hereditates capiunt; solis clericis et monachis hoc lege prohibitur et prohibitur non a persecutoribus, sed a princibus Christianis.

(It is shameful to mention that priests serving idols, actors, charioteers and whores may receive inheritances; clergymen and monks, alone are legally banned and it is prohibited not by persecuting emperors but by Christian ones.)

Jerome had faced this criticism in Rome. Like Pliny, in his rejection of Regulus’ behaviour, Jerome distances himself from certain colleagues. Employing Scriptural authority, he states:

68 Ibid.
69 Pliny, Ep. 4.10.
70 Pliny, Ep. 2.20.
72 Jerome, Ep. 52.6.
73 See 13–14 above; Jerome, Ep. 45.
ex his enim sunt qui penetrant domos et captivas ducunt mulierculas oneratas peccatis quae ducuntur variis desideriis semper discentes et numquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes.

(For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.)

The women under his patronage, however, are demonstrably strong-minded, pious and capable of making well-considered decisions. Asella, as a child, sold her gold necklace to buy sackcloth. Eustochium resisted the blandishments of her pagan uncle and aunt to enter Marcella’s ascetic circle. Paula followed Jerome to Bethlehem. Marcella refused an offer of marriage from a distinguished and wealthy suitor, such was her ascetic conviction.

Jerome demonstrates that, rather than exploitative, his association with women of discernment is that of a benefactor and protector of their souls, a *paterfamilias*, as he advises:

> Si quid ignoras, si quid de Scripturis dubitas, interroga eum, quem vita commendat, excusat aetas, fama non reprobat.

(If there is anything of which you are ignorant, if you doubt the Scriptures, ask the man whom his way of life commends, whom his age puts above suspicion, whom his reputation does not reproach.)

As his circulated letters to women deal with matters of exegesis and serious theological questions, he demonstrates that his women are not seduced by false doctrine. He impugns the motives and competency of other teachers of women. Jerome is reliable because, like a *paterfamilias* of the nobility, he has the right education which enables him to discern sophistry.

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74 2 Tim. 3.6–7; Jerome, *Ep.* 22.28
76 Jerome, *Ep.* 22.5.
80 See Jerome, *Epp.* 130.17; 53.7; 66.9.
So Jerome’s letters demonstrate a persona congruent with that of Pliny. Jerome also cares for women who, though clever, strong and independent, are in need of his expertise. But, as the Roman Empire begins to fracture in the West, Jerome took on the persona of *paterfamilias* to prominent women beyond Rome, strengthening his claim to an episcopal status. 81

**The Ideal Wife**

The third group that Pliny used to enhance his reputation as the arbiter of right living is his depiction of the ideal wife: betrothed, young wife, and then mature matron/widow. Jerome employs these categories in his letters. But what he proposes appears to be an inversion of traditional Roman values and becomes a platform for his agenda. 82

**Pliny’s Betrothed** 83

A letter from Pliny to Aefulanus Marcellinus laments the death of Minucia Marcella. Although not a *consolatio* to her father, the letter serves as a set piece for Pliny’s projection of himself and his views. Minucia had died before her marriage, thus becoming fixed in the mind of Pliny’s audience as the ideal young betrothed. Her character reflects her descent and training, the requisite qualities of an ideal wife: *festivitas* in youth; *gravitas* in maturity. She also reads ‘diligently and with discernment’. 84 Pliny commends this devotion to *lectio* in his wife Calpurnia, so it can be assumed that Minicia is exactly the kind of wife suitable for any high-minded Roman. 85 The fortitude and equanimity with which she faces death demonstrates ‘appropriate’ behaviour; a quality admired in Roman society by both Stoics and Epicureans.

The letter concludes with a switch in focus away from Minicia to the qualities of her father. While his grief may seem excessive to a Stoic audience, it is mitigated by the fact that he has lost ‘filiam, quae non minus mores eius quam os vultumque referebat’ ('a daughter who brought him to mind, no less in her character than she did in countenance and expression'). 86 If the reader were to question how a girl, not yet thirteen, could possibly be so virtuous and accomplished, the answer lies in her

81 See 207ff. below
82 See 77 ff.; 116; 166; 243–5 below.
84 Pliny, *Ep.* 5.16.
86 Pliny, *Ep.* 5.16.
resemblance to her father: good men produce good women. Significantly, the letter concludes with advice to the recipient from Pliny, the consummate stylist, on the fitting way to offer condolences, complete with aphorism. Pliny emerges once more as the wise expert on seemly conduct, the friend of virtuous people.

**Jerome and the Betrothed**

Jerome wrote directly to a betrothed girl. But Julia Eustochia’s bridegroom is Christ, not some scion of the nobilitas. The letter showcases Jerome’s credentials as a suitable mentor for the noble virgins of Rome. It is a tour de force of erudition, both scriptural and classical, suggesting a wider audience for it was intended. The letter is both familial and paraenetic; an exhortation to persevere in the life of the dedicated virgin and at the same time an invitation to the philosophical life. However, it can be deconstructed in a number of other ways.

Although Jerome claims to despise worldly attributes, he draws attention to Eustochium’s position and beauty. This in turn reflects his own importance as a guide to one of such rank and personal attributes. In addressing her as ‘mi domina Eustochium – dominam quippe debo vocare domini mei’ (‘my lady Eustochium – for thus I ought to call the lady of my Lord’), he is making the listener aware of Eustochium’s status, albeit with a pious gloss, because he is asserting that asceticism must be characterised by costly renunciation. Eustochium will surrender both her status and her good looks in the service of Christ. Jerome repeats the necessity of costly renunciation in his letter to Demetrias, another ‘betrothed’.

The letter does not dwell on Eustochium’s personal virtues apart from her virginity. It is full of warnings that heighten anxiety. Eustochium had already sought the enclosed life with Marcella. But Jerome presents himself as an expert spiritual guardian by cataloguing the pitfalls that await her:

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87 See Ch. 2 below for amplification of the letter.
89 See 77; 127; 154ff.
90 For Eustochium’s role in Jerome’s wider socio-political vision, see 76ff.; 87ff.; 99ff.; 115 below.
93 See 157 below.
Memento, quoniam in medio laqueorum ambulas et multae veteranae virgines castitatis indubitatae in ipso mortis limine coronam perdidere de manibus.  

(Remember, since you walk among snares, that many virgins of long-standing let the hitherto undoubted crown of their chastity slip from their hands at death’s door.) \(^{94}\)

In accordance with the conventions of the exhortatory letter he presents himself as a model for the life he is advocating:

Pallebant ora ieiuniis et mens desideris aestuabat in frigido corpore et ante hominem suum iam carne praemortua sola libid. inum incendia bulliebant.

(My face was pale with fasting but my mind in its chilled body was still burning with desire and the fires of lust kept on welling up before this man, his flesh already as good as dead.) \(^{95}\)

If he was tempted by sexual fantasies in an emaciated state in the deserts of Syria, how much more will she be so afflicted, a young girl used to soft living. \(^{96}\)

Jerome introduces a set of priorities for the betrothed: ‘ut sponsa Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno’ (‘as the bride of Christ avoid wine like poison’). \(^{97}\) Alms-giving, visiting the sick, strict attention to diet, the neglect of personal appearance and comfort, ‘wool working’ and separation from the world, especially its obligations, are all recurring precepts, yet some of them are not so very different from the ‘lanificia, pia, pudica, frugi casta domiseda’ (‘spinner of wool, reverent, modest, prudent, chaste, home-loving’) of Musonius Rufus’ ideal woman. \(^{98}\) Jerome always linked *lectio divina* with the precepts of ascetic *praxis*, the labour to which the virgin must apply herself most

\(^{95}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 22.7.  
\(^{96}\) Ibid.  
assiduously.\textsuperscript{99} Pliny had also advocated reading by both the betrothed and the wife who reflected her husband’s tastes.\textsuperscript{100}

Jerome has frequent recourse to Galen, concerning ‘the relationship between diet, digestion, the humours, and sexual desire in male and female bodies’.\textsuperscript{101} Brown presents a credible image of Jerome as the ‘house doctor’ for Paula’s mansion, where he seeks to cool Eustochium’s body for service to Christ, as opposed to ‘warming the body’ to promote fertility in the young and ensuring the preservation of the family line.\textsuperscript{102} Jerome definitively sexualised Paul’s notion of ‘the flesh’, believing, as Brown argues, that:\textsuperscript{103}

the human body remained a darkened forest, filled with the roaring of wild beasts that could be controlled only by rigid codes of diet and by the strict avoidance of occasion for sexual attraction … Men and women were irreducibly sexual beings.

Further, a body governed by desire always has the potential to ignite:

sed statim ut libid.o titillaverit sensum … erumpamus in vocem: “Dominus auxilator meus, non timebo, quid faciat mihi caro [sic]”.

(but as soon as desire will have titillated feeling … let us break forth and cry, “The Lord is my helper, I shall not fear what flesh may do to me”).\textsuperscript{104}

Jerome’s use of caro here substantiates Brown’s argument. Jerome substitutes caro (‘flesh’) for adam (‘man’) in the Hebrew Scriptures and ἄνθρωπος in the LXX:

κύριος ἐμοὶ βοηθός,
οὐ φοβηθήσομαι τί ποιήσει μοι ἄνθρωπος.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{99} Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.17; 54.11.
\textsuperscript{100} See 64 below.
\textsuperscript{102} Brown, \textit{Through the Eye of a Needle}, 263.
\textsuperscript{103} Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 376–7.
\textsuperscript{104} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.6.
\textsuperscript{105} N.B., the reference becomes 117.6 in the LXX.
Although the *LXX* uses *homo*, I suggest Jerome inserts the neat two-syllable *caro* to provide Scriptural imprimatur for the relating of ‘flesh’ and sexual desire.

Jerome advocated the confinement of Eustochium to her room to await the presence of the Bridegroom. Brown argues that Jerome’s aim was ‘to turn the palaces of the rich into ascetic fortresses, fostering a sense of elitism among the nobles’.¹⁰⁶ This militated against any sense of unity in the Church and kept the money ‘locked up’. Jerome did contextualise asceticism by appealing to the sense of elitism mentioned above.¹⁰⁷ Brown’s narrative is always appealing but the reduction of Jerome’s purposes to the economic is not quite fair, as Jerome commended liberality to the poor.¹⁰⁸ Further, suggestion that his satire was comforting to the rich Christians, since it showed all that was wrong with Rome was the ‘piquant misbehaviour of Christians in fashionable society’, limits Jerome’s wider purposes in the same way as Cox Miller’s application of feminist literary theory, to be dealt with in the next chapter.¹⁰⁹ Jerome’s satire was more than sniping at the rich. He takes the opportunity to introduce another persona, for himself, that of the wilderness prophet, castigating the sins of the city. False piety and the snares of riches come in for special attention, and alienated him from those whom he saw as compromised Christians:

Vidi nuper – nomina taceo, ne saturam putes – noblissimam mulierum Romanorum in basilica beati Petri semiviris antecedentibus propria manu, quo religiosisior putaretur, singulos nummos dispertire pauperibus. Interea – ut usu nosse perfacile est- anus quaedam annis pannisque obsita praecurrir, ut alterum nummum acciperet; ad quam cum ordine pervenisset, pugnus porrigitur pro denario et tanti criminis reus sanguis effunditur.

(Recently I saw – I keep silent about her name, lest you think this is a satire – the grandest lady in Rome standing in the basilica of Saint Peter, with her eunuchs arrayed in front of her. She was dispersing to the poor, with her own hand, so that she might be regarded as more pious, one solitary coin! Meantime – as one may very easily know from experience, a certain old woman, aged and ragged rushed up to the front in order to

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¹⁰⁶ Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 264.
¹⁰⁷ For strategies of elitism, see 92–7, 173, 177–180, 206–7, 216ff. below.
¹⁰⁸ Jerome, *Epp.* 22.6; 130.6.
¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 268.
receive another coin. When she came to her turn, she got a fist in the face instead of a denarius and so blood, guilty of such a great crime, was shed.)

This vignette is a showpiece for Jerome with its visual appeal of the mime, rendering the woman publicly ridiculous. He neatly catches out the proud ladies of Rome. If a woman considers herself ‘noblissima mulierum Romanarum’ she is exposed as a hypocrite in her piety. If she cedes that status, she loses face. Next, tongue in cheek, he draws attention to the genre: ‘nomina taceo, ne saturam putes’ (‘I name no names lest you regard this as a satire’). The work of the comic poets is evident, placing Jerome in the company of Horace and Terence. ‘Anus quaedam annis pannisque obsita’ echoes Terence’s ‘pannis annisque obsitum’. Horace’s style is copied in the mock heroic ending, ‘tanti criminis reus sanguis effunditur’. Having shown his accomplishment as a Roman litteratus, Jerome cannot be dismissed as an ignorant wild man of the desert. He constructs a sermon based on a pastiche of Scriptural texts on the perils of the love of money. Juvenal and Horace had both dealt with this theme but Jerome is showing his Christian credentials. This is typical of Jerome to transmute the genres of Rome’s classical literature to the service of asceticism. He rounds off the call to asceticism with a discourse on the cenobitic tradition. He is the expert in all things ascetic.

So Eustochium is given long and detailed instruction about every aspect of life as a betrothed of Christ and it is on these grounds that Jerome circulated the book, highlighting the dangers, if one did not have the right guide. Eustochium, like other Roman girls, was to bring honour to her bridegroom. But the letter also serves as Jerome’s folio of accomplishment: classical litteratus, exegete, mentor, exemplum, social commentator, ascetic expert and discerner of corruption in the heart.

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110 Jerome, Ep. 22.32.
111 See 12; 28; 50; 179; 213–15 above for Jerome’s use of the theatre in his writing.
112 Anicia Proba may be the target, as she belonged to the most powerful gens.
113 See Jerome, Ep. 117.1.
114 Wiesen, Jerome as Satirist, 2.
115 Terence, Eun. 236.
117 Horace, Sat. 1.1; Juvenal, Satires 1.9–10.
118 See 100ff.; 128ff.; 147ff. below.
Pliny’s Matron

For a Roman of Pliny’s class, a good wife was indispensable for his path to glory. However, the primary function of marriage was to produce children. In a letter to his wife Calpurnia’s grandfather, announcing her recent miscarriage, the role of children is clear: ‘neque enim ardentius tu pronepotes quam ego liberos cupio’ (‘for your desire for grandchildren cannot be keener than mine for children’).

Pliny’s letter to her aunt proclaims Calpurnia as the ideal wife, who has proved herself ‘dignam patre, dignam te, dignam avo’ (‘worthy of her father, worthy of you [her aunt who has raised her] and worthy of her grandfather’). The inference to be drawn is that she will be worthy of Pliny, because she reflects qualities that Pliny values in himself:

\[ \text{Summum est acumen summa frugalitas; amat me, quod castitatis indicium est. Accedit his studium litterarum, quod ex mei caritate concepit.} \]

(Her discernment and household economy are of the highest order: she loves me which is indicative of her virtue. She engages in the study of literature in addition to these; which she has taken up for love of me.)

She even learns Pliny’s works off by heart, in every way adapting to Pliny’s interests. This is in keeping with Pliny’s understanding of what will add to his reputation: ‘gloria dignus, qui … uxor quem virginem accepit, tam doctam politamque reddiderit’ (‘he is worthy of glory … who receives a wife as a maiden and makes her so learned and accomplished’). Calpurnia derives comfort in Pliny’s absence by proximity to his literary works. (We only have Pliny’s word for this.) His letter begins ardently with ‘Incredibile est quanto desiderio tui tenear’ (‘It is incredible how I am gripped by such longing for you’). However lovelorn Pliny may be, he does not neglect his duties as a popular advocate. Calpurnia is expected to produce children to continue the line and

119 Carlon, Pliny’s Women, 157–75.
120 Ibid., 139.
122 Pliny, Ep. 8.10.
123 Pliny, Ep. 4.19.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Pliny, Ep. 1.16.
127 Pliny, Ep. 6.7.
128 Pliny, Ep. 7.5.
the *fama* of their antecedents. Because she so perfectly reflects her husband’s aims and aspiration, Pliny must be an exemplary husband who knows how to train a young wife.

**Jerome and Matrons**

The virulence of Jerome’s attack on the fertile matron, diligently fostering her husband’s *gloria*, has affronted feminists. However, in this thesis, a different understanding of Jerome’s intention has been suggested. Since the matron was at the pinnacle of the *cursus honorum*, she was the antithesis of Jerome’s grand design for Rome and his desire to return women to their Eden state in the image of God.\(^{129}\) In employing the misogynistic literature of the philosophical schools and the Roman satirists against non-ascetic women, he sought to destroy the desire for marriage. When Jerome encountered pious, married women he attributed to them a desire for celibacy.\(^{130}\)

Despite prominent advocates such as Ambrose, asceticism was not universally accepted in the West. Throughout his long life, Jerome would conduct a rear-guard action, defending his view that celibacy was the certain path to heavenly reward. In his *consolatio* for Blesilla, Jerome mentions his braving the ‘ill-will of her family’ in his teaching on asceticism to ensure Blesilla’s place in heaven.\(^{131}\) Even Paula seems to have wavered about dedicating all her daughters as nuns.\(^{132}\)

In order to recast, in ascetic terms, the very heart of Roman communal and public life, namely, the family, Jerome must undermine the status accorded to the Roman matron. The Rome of Jerome’s making would be populated only by the celibate. Jerome perceived this as the life of perfect loyalty to Christ. Therefore, he dismissed the traditional view (as Pliny described it) that the chief duty of a Roman matron was devotion to her husband’s *gloria*. He warns Eustochium against any association with married women, precisely because their sole topic of conversation will be their husband’s achievements and not those of the heavenly Bridegroom.\(^{133}\) In a letter to Furia, he denigrates the traditional role of child-bearing, dramatising the trials of pregnancy.\(^{134}\) By destroying the role of the matron, Jerome could authenticate his eschatology that celibacy was the only certain road to eternal glory. In the following

\(^{129}\) See 81ff., 195ff below.
\(^{130}\) See *Epp.* 108.4 (Paula); 66.3 (Paulina).
\(^{133}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 22.16.
\(^{134}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 54.4.
chapter, I shall expound Jerome’s understanding of marriage that is predicated on a view of human sexuality and a biblical theology that saw marriage as a judgment on women.\textsuperscript{135}

**The Widow according to Pliny**

Carlon’s treatment of the matron centres primarily on Fannia, whom Pliny presents not only as an *exemplum* for men to present to their wives but, as *exemplum fortitudinis*, for himself.\textsuperscript{136} Pliny believed that good behaviour was best learned by *exemplum*.\textsuperscript{137} He expands the epithet *femina maxima* with a list of virtues normally attributed to men: ‘quae castitas illi, quae sanctitas, quanta *gravitas*, quanta *constantia*.\textsuperscript{138} These qualities were imbibed from her husband and her forebears. Fannia’s devotion as a widow is what commends her. She safeguarded her husband’s *gloria* by ordering his biography to be written and accepting exile for a third time rather than surrender his diaries.

Pliny is confident that Calpurnia will bear him heirs.\textsuperscript{139} However, bearing children was not the only way for a woman to become an *exemplum*. Fannia had only a stepson, Helvidius II. Ensuring a husband’s *gloria* by preserving his works displays a *constantia* that Pliny desires Calpurnia to emulate.\textsuperscript{140} In the *encomium* for Fannia, Pliny enshrines the virtue of an outstanding woman and his own virtue in claiming her as a friend.

**Jerome’s Widows**

Resistance to remarriage was not confined to the ascetic movement. Ancient literature and funerary inscriptions, both pagan and Jewish, commended those who remained unmarried after the death of a spouse.\textsuperscript{141} The example of Dido’s tragedy had a special resonance, in view of the hold that Virgil had on the Roman imagination. In his paraenetic letter to the young widow Furia, Jerome reminds her that in the 400-year history of her illustrious family, the women of that line very rarely remarried.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{135} See 81ff. 193ff below
\textsuperscript{136} Pliny, *Ep.* 7.19.
\textsuperscript{137} Pliny, *Ep.* 8.18.
\textsuperscript{139} Pliny, *Ep.* 8.10, 11.
\textsuperscript{140} Carlon, *Pliny’s Women*, 84.
\textsuperscript{141} See Pease’s learned (and long) footnote on ancient prejudices against second marriage with special reference to Dido’s vow: Arthur Stanley Pease, ed., *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos, liber quartus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche, 1967), 111. Many women remained unmarried because they were better off financially; see Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity*, 22.
\textsuperscript{142} Jerome, *Ep.* 54.1.
Jerome expects abuse from the powerful of Rome: ‘turba patricia detonabit, me magum, me seductorem clamitans’ (‘the patrician mob will thunder, shouting that I am a magician and a seducer’). He acknowledges that attempts to convert the men of the senatorial class have been futile: ‘Atque utinam praeconia feminarum imitarentur viri’ (‘Would that the men imitated the public confession of the women’). Jerome defends himself with the argument that anyone who believes in Christ ought ‘to walk as He walked’.

He narrows the definition of ‘to walk’ to mean imitation of Christ’s celibacy, whereas the context of John’s letter suggests emulating Christ’s character. Once again, Jerome is presenting himself as the embattled flag-bearer, leading the way to true holiness; the martyr, suffering the abuse of society. Asceticism as the new martyrdom is a recurring metaphor in Jerome’s writings. Paradoxically, he is proclaiming his own importance in asserting that his enemies are the powerful of Rome.

Jerome’s letters to virgins and young widows are very similar in their representation of him as the only sure guide in negotiating the perils of this world. They use the fear of ridicule to motivate but hold out the promise of the great learning that Jerome has to offer, and a heavenly reward.

Jerome used exegetical letters to older widows to promote his allegiance to veritas Hebraica. He criticised Hilary’s exegesis to Marcella, as being impaired because he was ignorant of the Hebrew language. He refused to lend a book by Bishop Rhetitius to her on the grounds of its Hebrew solecisms. Writing to Oceanus on the death of the rich widow, Fabiola, he attached a letter on the resting places of the Israelites in the wilderness, purporting to respond to a request from Fabiola. Cain’s analysis, that this expository treatise is a renewed attempt to defend his commitment to the Hebrew text, is convincing. The phrase ‘apud Hebraios’, for example, occurs at least six times. Jerome claimed to have read the text in Hebrew because of the textual corruption of the Greek and Latin codices, thus also defending the need for a new translation. The treatise

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143 Jerome, Ep. 54.2.  
144 Ibid.  
145 1 John 2.6.  
146 Jerome, Ep. 45.  
147 On the asceticism/martyrdom connection, see 77, 133, 146,158, 178–9, 214 below.  
148 See 69; 91; 100 below.  
149 Jerome, Ep. 34.3.  
150 Jerome, Ep. 37.  
151 Jerome, Epp. 77; 78.  
152 Jerome, Ep. 78.11; Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 176.
‘redditur memoriae illius’ (‘is offered up in her memory’).\textsuperscript{153} Cain argues that Jerome’s requirement that the two letters be circulated together was ‘to show that his Hebrew exegesis was not a tedious and inconsequential exercise but that it had applications to every-day life’\textsuperscript{154}

Yet this is not the only concern of Jerome’s correspondence with widows. Jerome would also employ his exegetical and paraenetic letters to widows in Gaul, which, ‘with its growing population of aristocratic Christians engaged in asceticism, represented a vast frontier of possibilities for Jerome the monastic propagandist’.\textsuperscript{155} An analysis of these letters and how they reflect a deeper pastoral concern, together with Jerome’s search for publicity, will follow in Chapter 6 below.

Through his letters to widows, Jerome expanded and consolidated his reputation as the reliable guide to the ascetic life for well-born virgins and widows beyond Rome.\textsuperscript{156} But Jerome was primarily interested in his reputation as a scholar of Scripture. The qualification for entry into \textit{de viris illustribus} is someone who has written on the Holy Scriptures.\textsuperscript{157} His letters to the well-connected, studious widows became the greatest advertisements of his ability as a commentator and translator of Scripture.

\textit{Exempla to be Avoided}

\textbf{Pliny’s Unseemly Women}

Four case studies are presented by Pliny to exhibit his moral authority. Casta, the wife of Classicus, was prosecuted by Pliny for complicity in her husband’s extortion, while governor of Baetica.\textsuperscript{158} Casta was acquitted. Pliny regards her as guilty, not of the criminal charge but, Carlon suggests, of defending herself instead of sharing her husband’s disgrace and dying with him.\textsuperscript{159} Casta ought to have had nothing to live for. The letter draws attention to Pliny, the arbiter of family life.\textsuperscript{160}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{153} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 77.12.
\textsuperscript{154} Cain, \textit{The Letters of Jerome}, 177.
\textsuperscript{155} Andrew Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula} 117 on the \textit{Subintroductae}: Satire, Apology and Ascetic Propaganda,” \textit{Augustinianum} 49, no. 1 (2009): 121.
\textsuperscript{156} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 123.1–4.
\textsuperscript{157} Jerome, Prologue to \textit{De vir. illus}.
\textsuperscript{158} Pliny, \textit{Ep.} 3.9.
\textsuperscript{159} Carlon, \textit{Pliny’s Women}, 196.
\textsuperscript{160} It also serves to gloss over Pliny’s failure as prosecutor.
\end{flushright}
In the trial of Gallitta, the adulterous wife of a tribune, Pliny again appoints himself an
arbiter of marital ethics, while acting as an adviser to Trajan.\textsuperscript{161} Gallitta’s adultery with
a centurion is not in doubt. It is the failure of her husband to divorce and prosecute her,
until duress is applied by Trajan that is at issue. Gallitta’s trial demonstrates that a
woman can impair her husband’s career; Pliny has no such fear, because he has
demonstrated that the husband is responsible for the wife’s character formation.

Ummidiata Quadratilla is a disgraceful old lady. In a letter announcing her death, Pliny
has a dilemma, because she is the grandmother of his protégé, Quadratus. Pliny protects
his protégé by pointing out that although Ummidiata was ‘delicata’ (‘addicted to
pleasure’), keeping a troop of actors, she did not allow her grandson to watch
performances and damage his reputation. Furthermore, she had the good sense to write
her will properly, appointing Pliny as her grandson’s guardian. But she had a lamentable
taste for board games. Carlon’s use of this example is not as convincing as the others
since Pliny’s attitude to her is ambiguous. She has bad habits but good sense in the
important issues.

\textbf{Jerome: ‘Frailty, thy name is woman’}

Pliny’s examples of unseemly women are restrained in their presentation. Jerome, on
the other hand, relishes the opportunity to display his rhetorical skills in his exposé of
certain women. Jerome’s focus is to destroy marriage as an option for the devout
woman.\textsuperscript{162} Jerome’s tactic is to induce apprehension at the possible loss of virginity.
‘False virgins’ must be identified:

\begin{quote}
\textit{virgines mala\textasciitilde{e}, virgines carne, non spiritu, virgines stultae, quae oleum
non habentes excluduntur ab sponso.}
\end{quote}

(wicked virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit, foolish virgins, who
having no oil are shut out by the bridegroom.\textsuperscript{163})

Some ‘fallen virgins’ will pretend to be widows so that they may go about freely or to
hide their pregnancy. Others will prevent conception or abort their babies, bringing
about their deaths and taking into hell the guilt of three crimes: suicide, adultery against
Christ and infanticide. Sin is compounded by a parody of devotion, when, in a drunken

\textsuperscript{161} Pliny, \textit{Ep.} 6.31.
\textsuperscript{162} See 78 below.
\textsuperscript{163} See Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.5, referring to Mt 25.1ff.
state, one such virgin says of the Communion wine: ‘Absit, ut ego me a Christi sanguine abstineam’ (‘Far be it from me to abstain from Christ’s blood’). The fear provoked in the latter case is that of being held up to ridicule, as much as the judgment of God.

Jerome is scorns women who are swayed by heresy, especially Origenism. They provide a contrast with Jerome’s own correspondents, rather than a calumny of all women. Such women cannot even understand the resurrection:

Solent enim mulierculae eorum mammas tenere, ventri adplaudere, lumbos et femina et puras adtrectare maxillas et dicere: “Quid nobis prode est, si fragile corpus resurget? Futurae angelorum similes angelorum habeimus et naturam.”

(For their ‘groupies’ are given to handling their breasts, slapping their stomachs, groins and thighs, stroking their hairless jaws, saying: “What good is it to us, if this frail body rises from the dead? If we are to be like angels, we shall have the form of angels.”)

Exemplary women have submitted to Jerome’s expertise, reflecting his teaching on the ascetic way and share his great learning and theological acumen. Women who ignore the claims of the celibate life (and Jerome) expose themselves to mockery.

Married women are the most dangerous, he warns:

Sin autem sola ieris … utique inter servos adulescentes, inter maritas feminas atque nupturas, inter lascivas puellas et comatos linteatosque iuvenes furvarum vestium puella gradieris.

(Should you, however, go out alone … a young girl in sober-coloured clothes you will certainly be stepping out in the company of youthful slaves, married women and brides-to-be, wanton young women and long-haired youths decked out in linen.)

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164 Jerome, Ep. 22.5.
165 Jerome, Ep. 84.6.
166 Jerome, Ep. 117.6.
This will lead to flirting and then, ‘inter viros matronasque’. the virgin will find herself eating and drinking and before she knows it she will be taking a bath!\(^{167}\) Jerome is exaggerating. It is unlikely that Pliny’s Minucia or Calpurnia would have kept such company. Jerome is creating a sense of superiority in his young women.

Particular savagery is directed at widows on the lookout for a second husband. He even includes a satirical description in a *consolatio* to Paula, on the death of Blesilla on such widows:

\[
\text{quas nec numerus annorum potest docere, quod vetulae sunt, quae capillis alienis verticem instruunt et praeteritam iuventutem in rugis anilibus poliunt, quae denique ante nepotum gregem trementes virgunculae conponuntur.}\(^\text{168}\)
\]

(whom no amount of years can teach them that they are old, who arrange the crown of their head with false hair pieces and polish up their previous youthfulness on the wrinkles of age, who, in short, conduct themselves like trembling adolescent girls before a group young enough to be theirgrandsons.)

These portraits of women seeking sexual experience occur in the context of his letters to Marcella, Paula, Eustochium and others whom he has celebrated as saintly, scholarly and celibate. The inclusion of these negative portraits heightens the contrast between the two groups, thereby enhancing Jerome’s own reputation and the reputation of the women. These exemplary women have submitted to Jerome’s expertise, reflecting his teaching on the ascetic way and share his great learning and theological acumen. Women who ignore the claims of the celibate life (and Jerome) expose themselves to mockery.

**Conclusion**

The taxonomy Carlon identified in Pliny’s employment of women to construct his reputation has provided a useful framework for an analysis of Jerome’s writing, revealing some of the ways in which Jerome would resist or accommodate himself to classical assumptions of right behaviour. Jerome, like Pliny, took the conventions of

\(^{167}\) Ibid.
\(^{168}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 38.3.
letter-writing and fashioned them to promote his reputation. He exploited the *consolatio* for pious influential women, not only to praise the departed, as a dutiful friend, but also to extricate himself from accusations of heresy and questionable morality. He inserted himself into their biographies to exaggerate his role in their adoption of eastern asceticism, trading on their reputations for piety and learning to strengthen his credentials as a mentor to virgins and widows.

His paraenetic letters provided a means of propaganda as ascetic mentor and scholar, and the opportunity to showcase his learning, both classical and Christian, but also how that classical learning might be transformed into the service of asceticism. Through these letters, he was able to express his vision for the reconstruction of the Roman aristocracy through women. Further, through women, he promoted *lectio divina* as legitimate expression of ascetic labour.

The exegetical letter facilitated his self-presentation as a benefactor or patron to influential women throughout Latin Christendom, promoted his *veritas Hebraica*, together with his status as one whose classical education enabled him to discern sophistry in others. At the same time, he displayed his ‘humility’ in rejecting rhetorical flamboyance when he approached the exposition of the Scriptures. Yet, the convention of rhetoric in letters enabled him to render ridiculous all whose behaviour opposed his rigid paradigms.

His familial letters attempted to bridge the social gap between himself and his rich patronesses. Cain makes the point that paraenetic letters presuppose a moral superiority on the part of the author to his addressee. By adopting the role of a *paterfamilias*, rather than importunate client, he developed a quasi-episcopal persona to extend his influence.

Jerome exploited and expanded the conventions of epistolography, anticipating a wider audience than the designated recipient. He promoted wider distribution of his letters conferring the status of manuals on them. He even used them to advertise his other works.

Although Jerome placed himself centre stage in his letters, how he commanded loyalty from women, who continued to seek his guidance, is a puzzle to be solved in this thesis. Part of the answer is that he took their spiritual and intellectual aspirations seriously and this will be further explored below. Moreover, the women on whom Jerome lavished his scholarship were of a certain type. In the following chapters, I will seek to show that
they were more than blank pages on which Jerome might write his reputation. Jerome’s letters were more than exercises in self-serving.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{169} Pace Georg Grützmacher, \textit{Hieronymus: Eine biographische Studie zur alten Kirchengeschichte}, 3 vols (Liepzig: Dieterich’schte Verlag, 1901–08), III.256.
Chapter 3: Eustochium – The Betrothed

The previous chapter set out Jerome’s use of correspondence with women to promote his reputation as the premier ascetic guide and scholar and to assert his membership of the educationally privileged, especially in his *Libellus de servanda virginitate* to Eustochium. Since this is a major source in scholarship for substantiating the judgment that Jerome is deeply misogynistic and an irredeemable self-publicist, this chapter will critique these perceptions and propose ways in which women benefitted from their engagement with him in return for their patronage.

Jerome divides modern scholars in their estimation of his attitude to women, in much the same way that he divided his contemporaries with his views on marriage and scholarship. David Wiesen’s judgment that Letter 22 was ‘the greatest slander of women since Juvenal’s sixth satire’ is a position I will seek to qualify. Kelly’s description of him is more sympathetic:

> Strongly sexed but also, because of his convictions, strongly repressed, as well, his nature craved for female society, and found deep satisfaction in it, when it could be had without doing violence to his principles.

However, Jerome was so adept at assuming and discarding roles for himself and creating theatrical scenes, it is impossible to say whether he was ‘strongly sexed’ or even ‘strongly repressed’ but I suggest that he did find ‘deep satisfaction’ in female company.

Cox Miller exegetes the letter to Eustochium from a feminist, literary perspective, focusing on the erotic aesthetics of the text and their psychological implications. She concludes that Jerome’s re-writing of Eustochium’s body is a ‘fetishisation’ where the identification of female sexuality becomes a “blank page” to be written by men. ‘Its fearful power to articulate itself is allowed only the channels of ephemeral virginity or

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1 For a meticulous identification of Jerome’s references to classical and Christian authors, see Neil Adkin, *St Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Letter 22)* (Oxford: Francis Cairns, 2003). These references are inserted into the text on the assumption that the elite will recognise the erudition whether or not the references are acknowledged.


4 See 195ff.; 221ff. below.
pornographic carnality’. In the final analysis, Jerome’s ‘vision of an imaginal female body, universally available as the goal of religious eros, was only a “tragic way of killing a woman”, where “cultural violence” is expressed in the “etiquettes of death”.

Although the scholarly readings above provide helpful insights, which I will draw on, I maintain that they overlook the outworking of sophisticated ecclesial, political and eschatological themes. Through Eustochium, the betrothed, the lowest rung in Pliny’s *cursus honorum* for women, Jerome challenged the existing social hierarchy, offering her more than eradication.

**The Behaviour of the Betrothed**

Pliny implied that the high standards of behaviour in the betrothed derived from her resemblance to her father. Jerome, however, designated certain letters as manuals, which detailed the behaviour of Christ’s betrothed and illuminated the ‘angelic’ life. This is an allusion to Jesus’ words to the Sadducees, when questioned on the marital status in the resurrection of a woman, who, following levirate law, had been married in turn to seven brothers. Jesus replied:

> Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Jerome’s understanding of the ‘angelic life’ as asexual informs the eschatology of his letter which, in turn, shaped his political and ecclesial ideas, since it looked forward to a physical raising from the dead and a certainty of reward, only for the celibate. At the forefront of his theology was Paul’s teaching on the ‘undivided heart’:

> But I want you to be free from concern. One who is not married is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is

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7 Jerome, *Ep.* 22.38. See Jerome’s letter to Ageruchia (123.17), recommending his letters to Eustochium, Furia (54) and Salvina (79) as manuals, all of which are examined below.
8 Lk 20.34–36.
unmarried, and the virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in both body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.\textsuperscript{9}

Foremost in Paul’s advice was the avoidance of any occasion for sexual temptation.\textsuperscript{10} For a young woman, this meant living within the confines of a pious family, because the virgin body is a metaphor for the perfect Christian life, untouched by the world.\textsuperscript{11}

Teresa Shaw describes texts that ‘create and confer new identities and the classification by which behaviour can be measured’.\textsuperscript{12} The new identity for the ‘betrothed of Christ’ is shaped by men, where, she argues:

\begin{quote}
Ascetic aspirations of individual women are channelled into an acceptable pattern of behaviour that confirms the authority and virtue of male leaders and bishops \textit{[askesis]}, then the fixation on decorum, the fear of deception by false appearances, and the warnings against heretics and flatterers – all standard features of the genre – become essential to ascetic discourse.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Taking up Bourdieu’s argument that ‘manner is the ideal weapon on strategies of distinction’, Shaw demonstrates how this is exemplified in discourse on the dedicated virgin.\textsuperscript{14} She claims that a common thread emerges where the virgin is instructed so that she is recognisably set apart for the ‘angelic life’ by her manner of life (\textit{praxis}): her seclusion, speech, demeanour, dress, habits and even her physiognomy (the latter shaped by her abstemiousness in food). The betrothed heeds the warnings of her mentor to protect her against heretics and worldlings. These externals must be accompanied by an inner purity of spirit. All these pointers are present in the letter to Eustochium.\textsuperscript{15} But, I suggest, Jerome’s virgins are expected to engage with the biblical theology of the family and eschatology of the body in the new heaven and the new earth that underpins

\textsuperscript{9} 1 Cor 7.32–34.
\textsuperscript{10} See 1 Cor 6.18. The biblical injunction is to ‘flee fornication’. This may also be an invocation of the Stoic ideal that ‘prepassions can assault the reasoning mind and cause it to make improper judgments’, seminar on 16 August 2014 at The University of Western Australia by David Konstan (New York University and UWA Professor-at-large) on \textit{Reason vs Emotion in Seneca}.
\textsuperscript{11} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.11, 23. For Jerome’s view of ‘the flesh’, see 60–1 above.
\textsuperscript{12} Teresa M. Shaw, “\textit{Askesis} and the Appearance of Holiness,” \textit{JECS} 6, no. 3 (1998): 486.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} See 59–61 above.
‘the angelic life’. His women are challenged with an intellectual basis for their behaviour, not simply a pattern.

Kate Cooper maintains that asceticism ushered in a new system of ‘social ranking’ that was replacing the old model comprising wealth, birth and marriage and that ‘the status of married women was on the wane’. However, Jerome was not interested in overturning social ranking for virgins of lowly birth. On the contrary, his aim was to subvert the pride of the senatorial class’ understanding of *fama* by reversing the *cursus honorum* for women. The virgin betrothed, centred on Eustochium, becomes the harbinger of a new Roman society, supplanting the male heroes of the past and entering heaven, at the head of a triumphal procession of women, to receive glory. But her membership of the *nobilitas* was essential to Jerome’s understanding of asceticism as the new martyrdom, where the greater the surrender, the greater the glory in eternity. Jerome concludes his description of how Eustochium must struggle as a betrothed, with the words:

> “Pretiosa in conspectu domini mors sanctorum eius”. Haec est sola digna retributio, cum sanguis sanguine compensatur et redempti cruore Christi pro redemptore libenter obcumbimus.

(“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints”. This is the only worthy reponse when blood is repaid with blood and as we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, we die willingly for our redeemer.)

*Jerome’s Manifesto*

Although Jerome had male patrons, such as Oceanus and Pammachius, men of the senatorial class, as a whole, were resistant to asceticism. Jerome complains:

> Atque utinam praecoria feminarum imitarentur viri et rugosa senectus redderet, quod sponte offert adolescentia!

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16 See Rom 8.28–38.
19 Ps 116.12.
(If only men would emulate the public example of women and that wrinkled old age would render what youth offers from the heart!)²²

His target audience was wider than one young girl during the heady days of his popularity. H. M. Jones suggests that the high value placed on the exclusiveness of their classical education accounted for the male members of the nobilitas’ rejection of Christianity.²³ In Jerome’s new order, young women, by their rigid self-discipline and learnedness, would become exempla, not only to other women, but also to statesmen. In this clarion call to asceticism, Jerome’s treatise for the transformation of Rome places the virgin centre stage.²⁴

When Constantine established Constantinople as his capital on the site of the old city of Byzantium in 324, Rome’s waning influence was confirmed. Despite his long exile, Jerome remained a Roman at heart, proud of his citizenship, Rome’s glorious past and the education and rhetorical skills that it had given him.²⁵ He would continue to direct much of his writing there, even after his removal to Bethlehem, and he grieved at the depredations of Alaric and the Visigoths in 410.

Yet Rome reflected conflicting images in Jerome’s literary landscape. Laurence identifies three ‘Romes’: a pagan Rome is succeeded by a Christian Rome;²⁶ while the new ‘Christian’ Rome could also be figured negatively, as ‘Babylon’, populated by pagans, morally lax Christians, Jerome’s enemies and heretics.²⁷ I suggest Jerome sought to construct a new socio-political future that would reclaim Rome’s past glory. This would be a monastic and scholarly Rome brought about by the rigorous eastern asceticism of the women of Jerome’s circle. Jerome’s vision was not simply reformist. He transmuted the old societal norms, related to property, ambition, status, marriage and family and even the world view of its literary canon to create a Rome, unswervingly

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²² Jerome, Ep. 54.2.
²⁴ For Jerome’s use of the theatrical in his writing to diminish, see 12; 50 above and 179; 213–14 below.
²⁵ Jerome was mentioned more than any other town in Jerome’s writings. See P. Nautin, “La ville chez saint Jérôme,” Latomus 20, no. (1961).
²⁷ See exegesis of Jerome, Ep. 45 in Ch. 1 above. Jerome’s ‘heretics’ were often represented as the opponents of his asceticism.
devoted to Christ, based on an eschatology that perceived this ascetic Rome as foreshadowing a heavenly Rome.\(^\text{28}\)

Hans von Campenhausen dismisses Jerome as ‘the most zealous, but also the most indigent theologian the ancient church produced’.\(^\text{29}\) This assessment may be modified in view of Jerome’s complex employment of intertextuality. In his letter to Eustochium, Jerome produces a detailed biblical theology, beginning with the Garden and ending with the triumph in the heavenly Jerusalem at the end times.\(^\text{30}\) His complex employment of the semiotics of soul/virgin and betrothed/church enables him to relate the virgin typology to the Church, the Christian soul, and by extension his own soul. With rhetorical skill, he applies Psalm 45 and the *Song of Songs* to Julia Eustochia, making her a living metaphor.\(^\text{31}\) The trope of marriage and conjugal eroticism unify his biblical theology: marriage in the ‘spirit’ to Christ leads to the undivided heart of 1 Cor 7.32–4; marriage in the ‘flesh’ renders uncertain the hope of eternal reward.

This marriage motif opens the letter where the soul is addressed as the bride, whose beauty the King will desire. Immediately, the focus switches to Eustochium who is presented in terms of her rank and the first hint of Jerome’s social transformation.\(^\text{32}\) Jerome invests her title, *domina*, with new meaning: she is *domina*, because she is the bride of Christ. Her spiritual rank exceeds her worldly rank. Jerome even refers to Paula, Eustochium’s mother, as ‘socrus Dei’ (‘the mother-in-law of God’).\(^\text{33}\) This is not just a bad joke: Jerome’s development of the marriage/family motif becomes evident below in a pastiche of Scriptural references. He begins by praising the humility of Mary at the annunciation of the birth of Jesus and then applies the pattern of Mary’s life to that of Eustochium:\(^\text{34}\)

*Potes et tu esse mater domini. “Accipe tibi tommum magnum, novum et scribe in eo stilo hominis velociter spolia detrahentis”, et, cum acceseris ad prophetissimam et conceperis in utero et pepereris filium, dic: “A timore tuo, domine, concepimus et doluimus et peperimus; spiritum salvationis tuae fecimus super terram.” Tunc et filius tuus tibi*

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28 Jerome would nuance this view as his circumstances changed to include the Rome of the provinces. See Chs. 4 and 6 below.
34 Lk 1.28.
respondebit et dicet: “Ecce mater et frateres mei.” Et mirum in modum ille, quem in latitudine pectoris tui paulo ante descripteras, quem in novitate cordis stilo volante signaveras, postquam spolia ex hostibus ceperit, postquam denudaverit principatus et potestates et adfixerit eas cruci, conceptus adolescit et maior effectus sponsam te incipit habere de matre.

(You, too, may be the Lord’s mother.35 “Take up for yourself a large, fresh tablet and write in it with the pen of a man who is swiftly carrying away the spoil”36 and when you have gone to the prophetess and conceived in your womb and brought forth a son, say, “Lord, we have conceived through fear of you, we have suffered and given birth; we have wrought the spirit of your salvation upon the earth.”37 Then your son will respond to you saying, “Behold, my mother and my brothers.”38 And remarkably, He whose name you have so recently inscribed across your breast and with a swift pen had written on the newness of your heart, after He has recovered the spoil from the enemy; after he has stripped the principalities and powers and nailed them to the cross, then following his conception, he grows in maturity, and on reaching adulthood begins to perceive you as his bride rather than his mother.39)40

Paradoxically, motherhood precedes the consummation. The quotes from the Prophets and the New Testament point to salvific events, where a new birth must take place and struggle must precede entry into glory, a recurring motif in this letter.41 By embracing God’s will as a dedicated virgin, Eustochium becomes a ‘mother’ to Christ, in accord with Jesus’ words:

qui respondens dixit ad eos mater mea et fratres mei hii sunt qui verbum Dei audiunt et faciunt.

35 F. A. Wright, inserts a ‘perhaps’ here, slightly altering the sense in Jerome, Select Letters, trans. F. A. Wright (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1933), 147.
36 See Is 8.1 rendered in the NASB: ‘Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters. Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.’
37 Is. 8.3 in NASB: ‘So I approached the prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son.’ Jerome renders it idiosyncratically.
38 Mt 12.49.
40 Jerome, Ep. 22.38.
41 See 87; 107–8; 121; 160 below.
(Replying to them he said, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear and do the word of God”.)

This places Eustochium in the train of Mary who manifested perfect obedience. The old order of betrothal, marriage, consummation and birth are inverted and spiritualised in Jerome’s new cosmos.

**The Centrality of Jerome’s Doctrine of the Virgin Mary**

Jerome centred his new order for Roman society on his doctrine of Mary. The prominence of her place in some Christianised cultures over the centuries owes much to Jerome’s theologising. Mary did not figure greatly in the writings of the immediate post-apostolic period. Focus on Mary emerged as a result of the docetic and Marcionite disputes. Geoffrey Dunn observes that Tertullian’s reference to Mary defends the reality of Christ’s flesh and human nature. Christ’s birth must be ‘real’ in the sense that he was born in the normal way, since his ‘flesh’ was derived from his mother. However, mainstream Christianity defined virginity not only as an absence of sexual experience but also as never having given birth. Dunn explains that:

> Both conditions need to be met and that Mary met them (*ante partum* and *in partu*) understood in the sense that Mary did deliver but miraculously, which did not damage her physical virginity (exemplified in *Protevangelium of James* with the intact hymen), as well as ever after (*post-partum*).

Irenaeus was the first to develop an Eve-Mary theology of recapitulation, reflecting that of the Adam-Christ. In Adam, the archetypal human, separation from God occurred through disobedience. In Christ incarnate, ‘the essence of human nature is healed and

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42 Lk 8.21. See also Mt 12.48; Mark 3.34.
43 For a comprehensive (and somewhat idiosyncratic) survey, see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
44 M. C. Steenberg, “The Role of Mary as Co-Recapitulator in St Irenaeus of Lyons,” *VChr.* 58, no. 2 (2004): 119.
46 Geoffrey Dunn, “Mary’s Virginity *in Partu* and Tertullian’s Anti-Docetism in De Carne Christi Reconsidered,” *JTS* 58, no. 2 (2007): 468–89. Dunn suggests that Tertullian was not a ‘systematic theologian’ but trying to win an argument, however, ‘systematic theologian’ seems an anachronistic epithet.
47 Ibid., 467–8.
48 See 1 Cor. 15.21–22.
restored’ through perfect obedience. Because of the uniqueness of Christ, Mary also stands in need of salvation. Her role in the recapitulative economy is to ‘restore the proper character of human interrelatedness’. Adam rebelled through interaction with another, Eve. Because Eve was created ‘out of Adam’ to be his ‘helper’, relationships within humanity must be restored, as well as the relationship between humanity and God. Presumably Mary fulfils this role of ‘helper’ perfectly in the words of Lk 1.38: ‘Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word”.’

Pauline Allen emphasises that Augustine did not employ the Eve-Mary nexus in his letters, nor refer to post-partum virginity. He focuses on rebutting the arguments of the Manichees, Arians and Pelagians, rather than virginity as such. Thus Mary’s mainstream theological presence was part of a developing Christology, which maintained the reality of the Incarnation.

A shift had occurred in the late fourth century, when the ascetic movement ‘spawned a new form of devotion to the virgin Mary’. Around 383, Jerome wrote ‘the first treatise in Christian history devoted solely to defending the perpetual virginity of Mary’, in response to ascetic anxiety over the writings of Helvidius. Helvidius rightly perceived the championing of virginity over marriage as signifying elitism in the Church. For Helvidius, Mary was a model for all Christian women in that ‘eiusdem vis gloria virgines et maritatae’ (‘virgins and married women are equally glorious’). Reminding the Church of the Christological controversy, he identified the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary as perceiving birth as intrinsically turpe (degrading or shameful). David Hunter explains:

49 Steenberg, “The Role of Mary as Co-Recapitulator,” 135.
50 Ibid., 136.
51 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 216, 229. Manichaism, originating in Mesopotamia with the prophet Mani, was characterised by dualism, extreme ascetic practices, secret revelations and the promise of enlightenment. See Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 33ff.
54 Jerome, contra Helv. See also David G. Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth Century Rome,” JECS 1, no. 1 (1993), 47.
55 Ibid., 48.
56 Ibid., 49. This was Jerome’s motivation in advocating superbia sancta in Eustochium, Jerome, Ep. 22.16.
57 Jerome, contra Helv. 22. See also Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary,” 47.
The rejection of Mary’s marital life rested on an essentially negative evaluation of human sexuality and procreation, one which led ultimately to a denial of the goodness of creation itself … Helvidius maintained that to deny the goodness of creation leads logically to a denial of the Incarnation itself and to the heresy of Docetism.\(^{58}\)

This presented a problem for Jerome, I suggest, for whom the Incarnation and birth of Jesus were very important.\(^{59}\) His choice of Bethlehem for his monastery, sanctified by Paula’s vision of the manger, bears this out.\(^{60}\) Yet, Jerome seems to regard birth and pregnancy as turpe.\(^{61}\) The solution to this tension between Christological orthodoxy, that Christ’s birth must be ‘real’, and Jerome’s focus on the intact female body, representing a new people, may lie in Jerome’s representation of Mary as the perfect femina, or Eve restored. She was married and a mother but never a wife in the sense of mulier.\(^{62}\) Therefore, she is the paradigm femina, Eve before the Fall; made in the image of God as in Gen 1.27: ‘et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam ad imaginem Dei creavit illum masculum et feminam creavit eos.’\(^{63}\)

She could be ‘fruitful and multiply’ (because this command preceded the Fall) but remain forever a virgin post-partum.\(^{64}\) This language of paradox, already present in Scripture with its motifs of Suffering Servant-Messiah, Cross-Crown, and God-Man, characterised Christian writing in the fourth and fifth centuries.\(^{65}\) Averil Cameron regards the theologising of the ‘mystery’ of the Virgin Mary as another such paradox of Christology:

\begin{quote}
To explain the mystery of the Incarnation, of which Mary was the vessel: to enumerate the details of biblical typology and the array of female examples from the Old Testament … of whom Mary and Her
\end{quote}

\(^{58}\) Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary,” 50. See Jerome, contra Helv. 18

\(^{59}\) See Jerome’s description of the cave of the Nativity, Epp. 108.10; 66.14.

\(^{60}\) See 48 above.


\(^{62}\) For comparison of terms in Jerome see 192–4 below.

\(^{63}\) ‘Femina’, including this reference, occurs only 35 times in the Vulgate; ‘mulier’, 500 times. See Bertil Axelson, Unpoetische Wörter (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1945), 57. Axelson also indicates its usage as ‘Frau in Gegensatz zu Mann’, 54.

\(^{64}\) Gen 1.28. Augustine rejected Jerome’s view of pre-Fall sexuality in Aug. De Gen. ad Litt. 9.3.6.

cousin Elizabeth were regarded as the successors, as well as Eve, whose sin Mary was held to have cancelled.66

Jane Barr observes that Jerome has substituted ‘et sub viri potestate eris’ (‘and you will be under your husband’s authority’) for the Hebrew ‘your desire will be for your husband’ in his translation of Gen 3.16:67

Mulieri quoque dixit multiplicabo aerumnas tuas et conceptus tuos in dolore paries filios et sub viri potestate eris et ipse dominabitur tui.

(To the woman also, he said, “I shall increase the burden of your pregnancies and in pain you will bear children and you will be under your husband’s authority and he will have dominion over you”.)

Barr comments that, while Jerome’s translation of Genesis is generally accurate, it departs from conventional meaning in some instances: he renders it more sympathetically to women, and seems to avoid references to procreation.68 We will see below that Jerome sought to isolate women from male authority and the double emphasis becomes male oppression in his rendering of the verse.69 Asceticism will set women free from this.

Procreation, according to Jerome, has incurred God’s judgment:


(“Be fruitful and multiply.” This command is fulfilled after the expulsion from paradise, after the consciousness of nakedness, after the fig leaves heralding sexual craving in marriage. Let him marry and give in marriage, who eats his bread in the sweat of his brow, whose land

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67 Barr, “The Vulgate Genesis and St Jerome’s Attitude to Women,” 272.
69 Jerome, Ep. 79.3; see also Jerome’s attempt to isolate the Aniciae from the male history of their gens, 142ff. below.
spawns thorns and spines, and whose crops are strangled with briars: my seed produces fruit a hundredfold.)

‘Nubuat et nubatur’ recalls the practice of the world under judgment before the Flood.

Children, according to Jerome, belonged to the material blessings of the old covenant:

Alia fuit in veteri lege felicitas. “Beatus qui habet semen in Sion et domesticos in Hierusalem.”

(Under the old law the concept of well-being was quite different. “Blessed is he who has seed in Zion and a family in Jerusalem.”)

‘Felicitas’ has connotations of fertility. Fertility and riches were the sign of God’s blessing to Israel. But the latter has also has been reversed:

… nunc benedicuntur pauperes et Lazarus diviti praefertur in purpure.

(In this age the poor are blessed and Lazarus is preferred over the rich man in his purple.)

Jerome further substantiates his argument by pointing out that, in the past, the world was empty and ‘sola erat benedictio liberorum’ (‘the only possible blessing was that of the gift of children’). However, as the population reached critical mass, virgin prophets such as Elijah and Elisha began to appear. The Virgin Mary, through giving birth to the Saviour, has reversed the curse on Eve; therefore, she is the recapitulation of all virgin women. Virginity represents a new dispensation, where that perfect life, exercised only by men under the old covenant, has now been extended to women:

Inveniebatur ergo, ut diximus, in viris tantum hoc continientiae bonum et in doloribus iugiter Eva pariebat. Postquam vero virgo concepit in utero et peperit nobis puerum “cuius principatus in umero eius”… Mors per Evam, vita per Mariam. Ideoque et ditius virginitatis donum fluxit in feminas, quia coepit a femina.

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70 Jerome, Ep. 22.19.
71 Mt 24.30. This is an awkward rendition from the Greek γαμέω καὶ γαμίξομαι.
72 Jerome, Ep. 22.21.
73 Deut. 7.12–16.
74 Lk 16.20–25.
75 Isa 9.6.
(As I have said, this virtue of continence was indeed found to be only in men but Eve continually gave birth in anguish. But after this a virgin conceived in her womb and gave us a child, “on whose shoulder is the government” … Death came through Eve but life through Mary. For this reason the gift of virginity has been poured out more lavishly amongst women since it began with a woman.)

In the above passage, Jerome tweaks Paul’s reference to Christ’s recapitulation:

> quoniam enim per hominem mors et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur.\(^7\)

(For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.)

Resurrection life comes through the Christ for all humanity but the liberation from pain in childbirth and male oppression comes through Eve, for a new virgin humanity. Christ and Mary represent a duality of virginity: ‘Christus virgo, virgo Maria utrique sexui virginitatis dedicavere principia’ (‘Christ as a virgin, the Virgin Mary have consecrated for each sex the origins of virginity’).\(^8\) Moreover, Mary was regarded as never having lived under the authority of a male, hence her fear at the presence of the angel, Gabriel.\(^9\) Therefore, Jerome claims a new order for the family has arrived:

> Statim ut Filius Dei ingressus est super terram, novam sibi familiam instituit, ut, qui ab angelis adorabatur in caelo, haberet angelos in terris.

(At the very instant that the Son of God set foot on earth he introduced a family of a new kind, so that, he who was adored by the angels in heaven, would have angels about him on earth.)\(^1\)

Jerome sets the eschatological framework for this letter.\(^8\) Tradition held that James and John were unmarried. The quote implies that Jesus surrounded himself with celibate

\(7\) Jerome, *Ep.* 22.21.
\(7\) 1 Cor 15.21–22.
\(7\) Ibid.
\(1\) Jerome, *Ep.* 22.21.
disciples, reflecting the angelic life of heaven. Therefore, a true disciple will emulate the angelic life, in preparation for heaven.

In the early 390s, celibacy underwent another attack. Jovinian argued against the superiority of the virgin life, stating that the Church, not the dedicated virgin, was the spouse of Christ. He applied terms such as ‘sister’ and ‘mother’ to all believers. Jerome’s letter to Eustochium was the probable source for Jovinian’s polemic. Ambrose’s work, De virginibus, in which the Song of Songs was applied to the life of the dedicated virgin, with Mary represented as the model for their calling, was already abroad. Jerome acknowledges Ambrose’s work:

In quibus tanto se fudit eloquio, ut, quidquid ad laudem virginum pertinet, exquiserit, ordinarit, expresserit.

(He has poured his very self into these [treatises] with such great eloquence such that he has sought out, ordered and set forth whatever is related to the praise of virgins.)

However, he qualifies this praise, shedding light on his own purpose:

Virginitatem non efferimus, sed servamus. Nec sufficit scire, quod bonum est, nisi custodiatur adtentius, quod electum est, quia illud iudicii est, hoc laboris, et illud commune, cum pluribus, hoc cum paucis.

(I do not extol virginity, but seek to keep it safe. It is not enough to know what is good, if what has been chosen is not guarded more diligently, since the former is a matter of making a decision, something common to the many, the latter is a matter of great effort, engaged in by the few.)

In essence, anybody can choose to be a virgin but only someone under Jerome’s tutelage will persevere, because he has struggled and prevailed as a result of his own desert experience. Women who follow Eve in coitus are destined for servitude and the pain of child-bearing. Jerome shows a different path.

81 Mark 1.19.
82 Peter’s wife used to travel with him (1 Cor 9.5).
83 Jov. 1.37 accords with the NT use in Rev 21.2; Eph 5.25.
84 Jov. 2.30.
85 Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary,” 53.
86 Jerome, Ep. 22.22.
87 Ibid., 23.
The doctrine concerning the nature of Mary’s virginity was not uniform. Hunter argues that Jovinian’s opposition to the teaching of Mary’s perpetual virginity was in accord with the anti-docetic teachings of previous generations of theologians who had rejected enkratic theories of creation, sin and sexuality. However, Ambrose taught that Mary was a virgin in partu and that only celibate Christians received the full grace of baptism. Jerome, following Origen, propounded the view of the virgin birth and virginity post-partum but rejected Mary’s virginitas in partu as Manichean and docetic.

While Jerome was clearly passionate in his asceticism and the doctrine of Mary was central to his argument, his reasons for attacking Jovinian were not entirely theological. Hunter argues that Jerome sought to regain his status, damaged by his banishment from Rome, as an anti-heretical writer. Further, he embraced the opportunity to differentiate his position from Pope Siricus’ endorsement of post-marital celibacy for the clergy and Ambrose’s linking of Mary and dedicated virgins with ecclesial authority. The backlash against Jerome was fierce but he was unrepentant, despite the remonstration of his patrons Pammachius and Dormio.

The Virgin and Typology

His typology of the virgin, centred on Eustochium, pushes the boundaries of contemporary theology, bringing gloria to an otherwise insignificant Roman girl, emphasising the Scriptural τόπος that first shall be last, and the last first. Yet, paradoxically, Jerome appeals to the innate sense of superiority among the nobilitas, while reversing its hierarchy.

The richness of the symbolism of the betrothed extends an understanding of the letter beyond that of controlling female behaviour and sexuality. Jerome so identifies Eustochium with the Church that her ‘fall’, signifies the violation of Christ’s Church:

89 Ibid., 203.
90 See Giancarlo Rocca, L’adversus Helvidium di San Girolamo nel contesto della letteratura ascetico-mariana del secolo IV (Bern: Lang, 1998). For a clear analysis of Origen’s position (and therefore Jerome’s), see also Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy, 184–6.
91 Ibid., 231.
92 Ibid., 213–19; 230.
93 See Jerome, Epp. 48, 49, 50.
94 Mark 9.35.
Cave, quaeo, ne quando de te dicat Deus: “Virgo Israhel cecedit: non est, qui suscitet eam” Audenter loquor: cum omnia Deus possit, suscitare virginem non potest post ruinam.

(Beware, I entreat you, lest someday God say of you, “The Virgin Israel has fallen and there is no one to raise her up.” I say this boldly, although God can do all things, He cannot raise up a virgin after she has fallen.)

*Virgin Israel* is a recurring trope for Israel in the Old Testament prophets. God nurtures the nation to adulthood where ‘she’ becomes His wife; not through any inherent attractiveness but because God wills to love her. But the wife is unfaithful, using her husband’s gifts to pay for her lovers. This rejection of love precedes judgment. Is Jerome extravagantly reducing a metaphor of judgment on a nation to a warning for a girl to remain sexually innocent? A more likely interpretation, in my view, based on the two related passages, is that Eustochium represents the ideal Church populated by virgins but just as *Virgin Israel* could be seduced, so could Eustochium/the Church. Jerome confirms this understanding of Eustochium as a symbol of the Church’s well-being:

Sponsa Christi arca est testamenti extrinsecus et intrinsecus deaurata, custos legis domini.

(Christ’s bride is the Ark of the Covenant, overlaid with gold externally and internally, a guardian of the law of the Lord.)

The implications of this metaphor are extraordinary. At a superficial level, it may mean that as the Ark was covered in gold, a sign of its purity, and secluded in the Holy of Holies, so must the dedicated virgin live. The Ark was inviolate and God’s judgment fell on any who touched it. But the ecclesial dimension is also present. Just as the Ark of the Covenant was central to the safety of Israel, so is the consecrated virgin to that of the Church. The commandments written by Yahweh, himself, were contained within the Ark, together with Aaron’s staff and manna: tokens of God’s Word and the miracles he

95 Amos 5.2.
97 See Hos 2; Ezek 16.23; Jer. 2.
98 Ezek 16.33.
performed among his people.\textsuperscript{101} Moreover, the Ark was the guarantee of the presence of Yahweh with his people, since it was the place of the Mercy Seat.\textsuperscript{102} The virgin is like the Ark: pure, untouched, internalising the Word of God through diligence in study and prayer, a miracle of self-control, and a visible guarantee of the presence of God’s mercy within the Church in Rome.

False virgins also become a type of the Church where the body is not congruent with the spirit: ‘virgines mala\ae, virgines carne, non spiritu’ (‘wicked virgins, virgin in flesh not spirit’).\textsuperscript{103} Dedicated virgins are like the canary in the mine, indicators of the health of the Church. If they are enclosed, domestic, and piously studious, following the disciplines of fasting and prayer, the Church is safe. But \textit{virgines mala\ae} are destructive of themselves and of the Church. Their ways must be exposed because they represent a faithless people of God committed to the old, proud, worldly dispensation, like Israel turning from God to the idols of the past:

\begin{quote}
ideo haec dicit Dominus interrogate gentes quis audivit talia horribilia quae fecit nimis virgo Israel\ae numquid deficiet de petra agri nix Libani aut evelli possunt aquae erumpentes frigidae et defluentes quia oblivus est mei populus meus frustra libantes.
\end{quote}

(Therefore the Lord says this, “Ask the nations, whoever has heard such a dreadful thing, that the virgin Israel has done beyond measure? Does the snow of Lebanon ever fail from the rock of the land; does its cold flowing stream run dry; yet my people have forgotten me, offering libations up to no purpose”.)\textsuperscript{104}

God’s judgment will fall on them, as it did on Israel.\textsuperscript{105}

The loss of inner virginity is depicted in Scriptural tropes. Fallen virgins are ‘re-written’ in terms of Isaiah 47.1, the representative virgin daughter, Babylon, and Ezekiel 16.25, the virgin daughter, Judah. Both are reduced to prostitution, as a judgment.\textsuperscript{106} Cox Miller argues that the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel ‘appropriated the female body

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{101} Heb 9.4–5.
\textsuperscript{102} Ex 37.6.
\textsuperscript{103} Jerome, Ep. 22.5.
\textsuperscript{104} Jer. 18.13–15. See also Isa 37.22–3.
\textsuperscript{105} Amos, 2.5; Lamentations 1.15; 2.13.
\textsuperscript{106} Jerome, Ep. 22.6.
\end{flushright}
metaphorically as a sign of spiritual debasement’. However, in the Scriptural context, the wicked virgins’ desire for a ‘husband’ is not the issue but rather that they have sought him where they ought not. Eustochium typifies the true filia Hierusalem, the Church. False virgins are the daughters of ‘Babylon’ (that is, pagan Rome). Their behaviour is a corruption of the practices of ‘Mother’ Church. Jerome sets this out earlier in the letter:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Piget dicere, quot cotidie virgines ruant, quantas de suo gremio mater perdat ecclesia, supra quot sidera superbus inimicus ponat thronum suum, quot petras excavet et habitet coluber in foraminibus earum.}
\end{align*}
\]

(It wearies me to speak of how many virgins fall daily, how many Mother Church loses from her embrace, over how many stars the arrogant foe establishes his rule, how many rocks the serpent hollows out and dwells in the cavities.)

The sexual overtones of the passage imply how false virgins become reprobate. They succumb to the ‘flesh’, while maintaining an appearance of godliness: ‘videas plerasque viduas ante quam nuptas infelicem conscientiam mentitia tantum veste protegere’ (‘you may see very many women, “widows” before they were even married, covering up their uneasy conscience with only bogus [widow’s] clothing’). The false virgin of Rome, the Church, in accommodating itself to the old ways of corruption beneath the ‘clothing’ of piety, has no hope of heavenly reward. The focus is not on desexualising women but on the nature of the exclusive relationship of the Church to God.

Manichaean virgins have the right external appearance, yet a wrong doctrine that damns them. Therefore, Jerome describes them in terms antithetical to the ‘the bride’ – they are ‘scorta’ (‘whores’). Some virgins fulfil all the criteria except humility. Jerome derides their hypocrisy:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Desisti … quando in conventu fratrum veneris vel sororum, humili sedeas scabello, te causeris indignam, vocem ex industria quasi confecta}
\end{align*}
\]

109. Jerome, Epp. 7.5; 45.6.
111. Ibid.
ieiuniis tenues et deficientis imitata gressum umeris innitaris alterius. Sunt quippe nonnullae exterminantes facies suas, ut pareant hominibus ieiunare; quae, statim ut aliquem viderint, ingemescunt, demittunt supercillium et operta facie vix unum oculum liberant ad videndum.

(Whenever you come into a gathering of brothers or sisters, refrain from sitting on a lowly footstool, pretending that you are unworthy of anything else. Refrain from making your voice faint, as if you are exhausted from the effort of fasting; do not lean on the shoulder of another imitating the steps of one worn out. A few women actually mar their faces so that they appear to people present to be fasting. As soon as they see anyone, these women sigh and lower their gaze and covering their face, barely keep one eye free for seeing.)\textsuperscript{113}

The true virgin models humility to the \textit{nobilitas} that will be transmuted into true glory at the return of Christ.

**Satire as a Strategy**

Cox Miller expresses surprise at Jerome’s sending a woman ‘a portrait of women that is filled with biting ridicule’\textsuperscript{114}. However, Vincent Skemp indicates how the frequent use in Jerome’s commentaries ‘of the noun \textit{exemplum} to render the verb רָאָיָשׁ points to his belief that people learn by example: a belief found in his epistles where he provides \textit{exempla} for his readers’\textsuperscript{115}.

Pliny also employed women as models of good and bad conduct.\textsuperscript{116} Jerome assumes the Roman view that a wife’s behaviour is an example of her devotion to her husband. False virgins humiliate their bridegroom Christ, just as a disobedient Church reflects badly on Him. Such wickedness and ingratitude for love is exposed and excised through scorn, as in the examples above of the \textit{malae virgines}.

Human marriage represents the old ways of Rome, so Jerome draws on the literature of Rome to destroy the institution. Wiesen observes:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Jerome, \textit{Ep}. 22.27.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} See 68–9 above.
\end{itemize}
In his mordant attacks on women more than in any other aspect of his satire, St Jerome was the heir of an age-old literary tradition. Throughout antiquity the question, *an vir ducat uxorem?* was one of the most widely discussed topics of popular ethics. Since the question was usually answered in the negative, its continued treatment produced a large body of antifeminist literature.\(^{117}\)

In his polemic against Jovinian, Jerome refers to the works of Euripides where, ‘whole plays are censures of women’, dealing with their allegedly dark and irrational nature.\(^{118}\) Other pessimistic treatises are mentioned:

\begin{quote}
Scripserunt Aristoteles et Plutarcus et noster Seneca de matrimonio libros ex quibus et superiorea nonnulla sunt, et ista quae subicimus.
\end{quote}

(Aristotle and Plutarch and our Seneca have written treatises on matrimony, some of which are above and we have added some more.)\(^{119}\)

Jerome most relishes the works attributed to Theophrastus that contain the line ‘*an vir uxorem ducat*’.\(^{120}\) Theophrastus’ alleged descriptions of the failings of the married women also have a burlesque quality:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

(Next, throughout the night, complaints that go on and on: that woman goes out in public better dressed, this one is esteemed by everybody; I am despised as pitiful at the ladies’ gatherings; why were you staring at the woman next door?; what were you talking about to the maid?; what did you bring from the market?; I am not allowed to have a friend.)\(^{121}\)

\(^{117}\) Wiesen, *Jerome as Satirist*, 113.
\(^{118}\) Jerome, *adv. Iov.* 47.
\(^{119}\) Ibid., 49. See Plutarch, *Praecepta coniungalia* and Seneca, *De matrimonia*.
\(^{121}\) Jerome, *adv. Iov.* 1.47.
Eustochium grew up in a culture where misogyny was supported philosophically and in literature, so the ridiculing of women was not new. Roman satire exposed the ills of society in order to correct them. Jerome’s strategy, in the satirising of married women and exaltation of the virgin, redeployed authority away from the paternfamilias and honour away from the matron.\textsuperscript{123}

Following the brief rule of Julian the Apostate, when dedicated virgins had been forcibly married off, the death penalty was instituted protecting them from forced marriage.\textsuperscript{124} However, girls were discouraged from taking the oath before their late teens.\textsuperscript{125}

Daughters were often given to the Church to avoid dowry payments or the expense of raising them. In the event of their being required for the marriage market, they might be withdrawn from the Church. To counter this practice, dedicated virgins were referred to as ex voto (a sacred vessel dedicated to the Lord).\textsuperscript{126} Jerome, by identifying Eustochium with the Bride of the Song of Songs, intensified the sacral prohibition. To marry her off would be tantamount to blasphemy, because it would mean choosing a human bridegroom over Christ. Jerome’s intention is clear in the opening to the letter to her:

\begin{quote}
Verum non sufficit tibi exire de patria, nisi obliviscaris populi et domum patris tui et carne contempta sponsi iungaris amplexibus.
\end{quote}

(But it is not enough for you to go out from your country, unless you forget your people and your father’s house, and, when you have despised the flesh, you join in the bridegroom’s embraces.)\textsuperscript{127}

Eustochium must avoid married women, because they represent the old dependence on men for status:

\begin{quote}
Nolo habeas consortia matronarum, nolo ad nobilium accedas domos, nolo te frequenter videre quod contemnens virgo esse voluisti. Si sibi solent adplaudere mulierculae de iudicibus viris et in aliqua positis dignitate, si ad imperatoris uxorem concurrit ambitio salutantium, cur tu
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[122]{See comment on Juvenal, 13 above.}
\footnotetext[123]{See; 141ff.; 247 below.}
\footnotetext[124]{Codex Theod. 9.25.1.}
\footnotetext[125]{Brown, The Body and Society, 260.}
\footnotetext[126]{Ibid.; see also Eusebius of Emesa, Homily 6.18.}
\footnotetext[127]{Jerome, Ep. 22.1.}
\end{footnotes}
facias iniuriam viro tuo? Ad hominis coniugem Dei sponsa quid properas? Disce in hac parte superbiam sanctam; scito te illis esse meliorem.

(I don’t want you to have any association with married women, I don’t want you frequenting the homes of the nobility nor do I want you to gaze upon what you are always rejecting since you desired to be a virgin. Should these ladies, as is their wont, brag about the fact that their husband is a judge or has received some high honour, or even if the desire for social climbing drives some to run to greet the Emperor’s wife, why would you cast a slur your husband? Why would you, God’s bride, rush off to the wife of a mortal? Learn in this circumstance a holy pride; know that you are better than they.)

Jerome elevates Eustochium above the Emperor’s wife. But, as Eustochium is also a symbol of the pure Church, Jerome implies a political view that the authority of the Church now exceeds that of the Emperor. Ambrose had already depicted the virgin as married to a superior husband and an everlasting king. Jerome picks up on this, addressing the virgin’s mother:

Quid invides, mater, filiae? Tuo lacte nutrita est, tuis educata visceribus in tuo adolevit sinu, tu illam sedula pietate servasti; indignaris, quod noluit militis uxor esse, sed regis? Grande tibi beneficium praestitit; socrus Dei esse coepisti.

(What, mother, are you begrudging your daughter? She was nourished with your milk and born from your womb, she has grown to maturity at your knee, you have kept her safe with your watchful devotion; Are you irked because she does not want to be the wife of a soldier, but a king? She has done you a great service; you are about to become the mother-in-law of God.)

The virgin’s family now enters into a relationship of amicitia with God, signified by the reference to the mother-in-law. This reconfiguration raises the status of the virgin’s
family in Jerome’s new society and is a radical re-evaluation of societal norms. Moreover, in Jerome’s eschatology, it signifies eternal reward. Because the status of the virgin is so exalted and the symbolism attached to her person so important for an understanding of the nature of the Church, lesser aspirations centred on the conventional Roman wife, the false virgin and husband-hunting widow are scorned in order to shame women tempted to follow that path. Every aspect of their lives is deemed contemptible: appearance, love of luxury, eating and drinking habits and piety.\textsuperscript{131}

Wiesen comments that, ‘Much of the technique and vocabulary of Jerome’s satiric invective has close parallels to the polemic of Cicero’s speeches’.\textsuperscript{132} Thus adherents to Rome’s pagan values, the antithesis of the ‘angelic’ life, are in the dock, as Jerome turns on them the very forensic techniques of that pagan past to which they cling.

Cox Miller, however, attributes a fear of the female body’s ‘power to articulate itself’ as the motivation for Jerome’s satire, hidden under the pretence of ‘social criticism of Roman Christian women, whose behaviour he has observed at first hand’.\textsuperscript{133} Dismissing the possibility of social critique, she claims that the women depicted are caricatures and not based on social observation.\textsuperscript{134} That Jerome’s satire is not always original does not mean that it is never original.\textsuperscript{135} Further, caricature is the very stuff of satirical, social commentary.\textsuperscript{136} It depends on the targets being recognisable; a feature of Jerome’s satire attested to by Rufinus.\textsuperscript{137} Moreover, Jerome satirised not only women, but also men. Some are even named, such as Antimus and Sophronius.\textsuperscript{138} Others are thinly disguised as follows:

\begin{quote}
E quibus unum, qui huius artis est princeps, breviter strictimque describam, quo facilius magistro cognito discipulos recognoscas. Cum sole festinus exsurget; salutandi ei ordo disponitur; viarum compendia requiritur, et paene usque ad cubilia dormientium senex inportunus ingreditur. Si pulvillum viderit, si mantele elegans, si aliquid domesticate supellectronis, laudat, miratur, adtrectat, et se his indigere
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131}See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.27, 13–14 and 32 respectively.
\textsuperscript{132}Wiesen, \textit{Jerome as Satirist}, 10.
\textsuperscript{133}Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 25.
\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., 198.
\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{137}Ruf. \textit{Apol.} 2.5.43. I have suggested that Proba is the target of Jerome’s satire, 62 above.
Jerome relished the use of invective, and his disclaimers – ‘pudet reliqua dicere, ne videar invehi potius quam monere’ (‘I am embarrassed to speak further in case I am seen to employ invective rather than admonition’) – serve to draw attention to it.\textsuperscript{140} Speech, appearance and piety are pilloried in both men and women as Jerome’s most effective weapon in promoting asceticism. He strips matrons and worldly clergy of their supposed honour to exemplify a moral sickness within the Church that was adapting itself to the former political and social order of Rome. Jerome’s satire gives an edge to his ecclesial and political purpose, not primarily because of a ‘fear of the female body’s power to articulate itself’.

\textit{Ecclesiastical Authority: The Monk and the Virgin}

We have seen that Jerome sought to assert his authority over ascetic mentoring.\textsuperscript{141} But Jerome also upheld the authority of the Church’s role in maintaining orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{142}

I submit that a question of ecclesial authority motivates the inclusion of the long section on good and bad monks. He criticises the Remnuoth monks because they live, ‘suo

\textsuperscript{139} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.28.
\textsuperscript{140} See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.22, 28; 127.2; 108.1.
\textsuperscript{141} See 17–18; 56–7 above.
\textsuperscript{142} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 133.12.
arbitratu ac dicione’ (‘by their own will as their authority’). This is more than an attempt to rid himself of rivals. Rousseau sums up Jerome’s attitude:

The ‘corner of the monastery’ represented a corner of the church, a disciplined school of humility that would embrace those naturally endowed with a sense of cultural superiority and make them instruments for the instruction of others in the Christian faith.

These references to authority represent two important power shifts in Jerome’s society but they both have the same theological underpinning. First, the monk must be isolated from family responsibilities, because only then will he be free, since ‘aries iste pietatis, quo fides quatitur, evangelli retundendus est muro’ (‘the battering ram of family piety, by which faith is shaken, must be driven back by the wall of the Gospel’). Isolation allowed the monk to engage in his proper calling, the study of God’s word, but he must do so in an orthodox community, since the Church is also the arbiter of meaning. Study of the Scriptures will strengthen the Church in bringing about a transformed society. Jerome advises Rusticus: ‘Mihi placet, ut habeas sanctorum contubernium nec ipse te doceas et absque doctore ingrediaris viam’ (‘I would prefer you keep the society of holy men and not to teach yourself, setting out on a path without a teacher’). The Remnuoth monks wandered about, subject neither to study nor to the Church’s oversight. The heat of debates on orthodoxy during Jerome’s life time accounts for the focus on theological authority and his own insistence on his orthodoxy. Rousseau draws attention to the role of monks in the debates, especially as their monasteries were usually located within the vicinity of towns.

Seclusion in a Christian home was prescriptive for ascetic women, not living independently, as some dubious virgins did. Paradoxically, seclusion was both their pathway to fame and an alternative future. Agapetae (beloved sisters) receive particular opprobrium for claiming a spiritual superiority that enabled them to live platonically

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143 Jerome, Ep. 22.34.
145 Jerome, Ep. 14.3; see, in similar vein, 53.5; 66.12.
146 Jerome, Ep. 133.12.
147 Jerome’s admonitions are substantiated by reference to the Scriptures, especially in this letter.
149 Jerome, Ep. 22.38.
150 Jerome, Ep. 22.38.
with a monk. Jerome flatly denies this possibility, calling them ‘meretrices univirae’
(‘one-man wantons’) because they exemplify false Christians who want the glory of the
‘spirit’ together with the pleasures of the ‘flesh’.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.14.} They do not live under the authority
of their Bridegroom, but a human substitute. Moreover, virgins lived in cities or towns.
In the East, Jerome would have witnessed the power and prestige of the virgin retinues
in Constantinople.\footnote{Elizabeth A. Clark, \textit{Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations} (Lewiston, NY:
Mellen, 1979), 132.}

Noble virgins in Rome in their devotion to the ‘Word’, incarnate and written, modelled
the Church and the power of Christ. However, women who read the Scriptures may be
led astray by false teachers, hence Jerome’s recourse to 2 Tim 3.7–8. So Jerome warns
Eustochium that although she lives an enclosed life, she will need an orthodox mentor,
just as he advised Rusticus.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.29. For Jerome as \textit{paterfamilias}, see 35, 42, 55–7 above.}
Because Eustochium is both a type of and model for the Church, she has a responsibility:

\begin{quote}
Crebrius lege et disce quam plurima. Tenenti codicem somnus obrepat et
cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat.

(Read regularly and learn as much as possible. Let sleep creep up on you
and come upon you while you are holding a book and let the sacred page
hold up your drooping head.)\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.17.}
\end{quote}

Study of the Scriptures was her ‘labour’ and through it she could hold fast to her
profession when faced with temptation. But even this may be corrupted by the false
virgin. The following cameo demonstrates how a woman surrenders her wardrobe, yet
indulges in an extravagant show of scholarship:

\begin{quote}
Inficitur membrana colore purpureo, aurum liquescit in litteras, gemmis
codices vestiuntur et nudus ante fores earum Christus emoritur.

(Parchments are dyed purple, gold is melted for the letters, manuscripts
are adorned with jewels and Christ dies naked before their doors.)\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.32.}
\end{quote}

Manuscripts are for earnest study, not display at the expense of charity, making a
travesty of a sacred task.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{151}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.14.
\bibitem{152}Elizabeth A. Clark, \textit{Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations} (Lewiston, NY:
Mellen, 1979), 132.
\bibitem{153}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.29. For Jerome as \textit{paterfamilias}, see 35, 42, 55–7 above.
\bibitem{154}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.17.
\bibitem{155}Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.32.
\end{thebibliography}
In the sections above, Eustochium has been seen as a type of the Church and also a model of the ideal Christian and part of the ‘angelic’ race inaugurated by Jesus and Mary. She represents Paradise regained and is the harbinger of a new Rome. This is her glory. Yet, even the Manicheans, Jerome claims, know that the term ‘virgin’ brings glory. How much more fame will accrue to one from the highest level of society, renouncing so much for Christ. Glory, paradoxically, can only come through the reorienting of what Rome valued: wealth, fame, amicitia and family. But why should Jerome or Eustochium regard glory as desirable? Was this not an anomaly in Jerome’s plan for the transformation of Roman society?

Although Jerome may equate Rome with Babylon, it remained at the centre of his aspirations. A world apart from its social structures was inconceivable. He owed to Rome his prized education, so he sought to reinterpret Rome’s social institutions in terms of his ascetic vision. Thus, Eustochium can remain a mistress of slaves but in a new Rome her rule is tempered by love and the recognition of their common faith. However, a slave’s marriage would not be as catastrophic as Eustochium’s:


(If any of your female slaves have been set apart with you, do not elevate yourself before them nor puff yourself up as their mistress. Your starting place is one bridegroom, together you sing psalms to Christ, together you receive his body. Why should there be a separate table? Let other women be challenged. Let the honour shown to your virgins be an invitation to others. If you find one weak in faith, support her, comfort her, coax her and make her chastity your own treasure. If, however, a

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156 Jerome, Ep. 22.38.
girl is just making a pretence to avoid work, read the Apostle to her openly, “It is better to marry, than to burn.”)\(^{157}\)

Eustochium is assumed to be the spiritual superior, despite the call to humility in sharing the Communion but a Roman \textit{domina} must always be on the lookout for the opportunist slave, ready to shirk her duties.

Jerome repeats his warning about friendship with married women, ‘quae maritorum inflantur honoribus’ (‘who are puffed up with their husbands’ successes’).\(^{158}\) Eustochium will win her own honours, heralding a new order.

In antiquity the ‘crown’ was emblematic of the highest glory attained in competition, warfare or politics. It is taken up in the New Testament as the reward for perseverance in well-doing.\(^{159}\) Jerome invests it with his own meaning as the reward for virginity in the heavenly Jerusalem. But Jerome always juxtaposes the hope of glory with the threat of loss.\(^{160}\) His picture of elderly nuns, succumbing to sexual temptation on their death beds, is farcical; yet, its shocking unseemliness threatens a fallen virgin with ridicule, the very antithesis of glory for the \textit{nobilitas}.

But glory, like Roman society, has a hierarchy. In his \textit{Adversus Jovinianum}, Jerome takes the numbers 30, 60, and 100 to refer to the states of marriage, widowhood and virginity respectively, a hierarchy of marital status.\(^{161}\) In the context of the parable of the Sower, however, the numbers refer to the harvest of believers.\(^{162}\) In Jerome, the social order of Rome is reversed. Eustochium will receive a greater reward than her elder sister Blesilla, who though a celibate widow, forfeited the higher reward by marrying.\(^{163}\) Pliny had indicated the path to reputation for a Roman girl was through marriage to an eminent man and bearing children.\(^{164}\) While death brings to an end even the best marriage, the virgin betrothed can look forward to an eternal union, basking in the glory of the Bridegroom, with none of the disadvantages of an earthly marriage. Jerome’s eschatology informs his understanding of family, reputation and well-being in his new society.

\(^{157}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.29. See 1 Cor 7.9.
\(^{158}\) Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.16; 14.4.
\(^{159}\) 1 Cor 9.25; Phil 4.1; Rev 4.4; 2 Tim 4.18.
\(^{160}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.29. See 22.5; 54.13.
\(^{161}\) See also Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 49.2; 22.15.
\(^{162}\) Mt 13.3.
\(^{163}\) See also Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.15, 19; 67.2.
\(^{164}\) See 63–4 above.
Jerome never doubted the power of his writings to confer lasting fame. By taking the *Song of Songs* and applying it directly to Eustochium in her youth, he brings her fame as a timeless image of what the Church should be.

**Eroticism as Metaphor**

While human marriage has been ridiculed and dismissed as a type of apostasy, marriage itself has remained a unifying symbol in this letter to Eustochium. Erotic, conjugal metaphors are used by Jerome to underscore the spiritual delight of the union of the soul with the Bridegroom.

In this section, I examine, largely in dialogue with the thoughtful and influential work of Cox Miller, whether or not the employment of erotic imagery eradicates Eustochium as a person. Although dated, this article is a well argued and subtle application of feminist literary theory and poststructuralism. However, while acknowledging the perceptiveness of much of her critique, I wish to test elements of her interpretation by drawing attention again to Jerome’s wider political and theological representation of Eustochium.

Cox Miller highlights two tropes from the *Song of Songs* applied to Eustochium. The first is closure: both a ‘physical sequestration’ and also the closed nature of the virgin body, ‘Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant’ (‘Let the solitude of your bedroom always protect you’). The virgin must not go about freely like other women or she may suffer violation like Jacob’s daughter, Dinah. But once she is living at her most virginal, that is, in her ‘enclosed’ room with her body intact, the King will come to her. Her room becomes a bridal chamber.

This leads to the second image, identified as ‘seductive foreplay’. The closure of body and space means ‘erotic desire is intensified’ rather than diminished as the following narrative suggests:

> Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant, semper tecum sponsus ludat intrinsecus. Oras: loqueris ad sponsum; legis: ille tibi loquitur, et cum te

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166 Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body.”
171 Ibid., 28.
somnus oppresserit, veniet post parietem et mittet manum suam per foramen et tanget ventrem tuum, et tremefacta consurges et dices: "Vulnerata caritatis ego sum" et rursus ab eo audies: "Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa, fons signatus."

(Always let the solitude of your bedroom protect you, always let the Bridegroom enjoy you within. When you pray: you are speaking to him; when you read: he is speaking to you, and when sleep overcomes you, he will come behind the wall and put his hand through the hole and will touch your belly and, awakened, you will rise and say: “I am smitten with love,” and again you will hear from him: “An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride, a sealed fountain.”)\(^\text{172}\)

This follows the Scriptural narrative:

I was asleep but my heart was awake.
A voice! My beloved was knocking:
“Open to me, my sister, my darling,
My dove, my perfect one!
For my head is drenched with dew,
My locks with the damp of the night.”
“I have taken off my dress,
How can I put it on again?
I have washed my feet, How can I dirty them again?”
My beloved extended his hand through the opening,
And my feelings were aroused for him.
I arose to open to my beloved;
And my hands dripped with myrrh,
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,
On the handles of the bolt.
I opened to my beloved,
But my beloved had turned away and had gone!

\(^{172}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep. 22.25}. 
My heart went out to him as he spoke.
I searched for him but I did not find him;
I called him but he did not answer me.\textsuperscript{173}

Other commentators on Jerome are also bemused by this eroticism in Jerome’s letter. Kelly observes:

It is ironical to reflect that, in urging a young girl like Eustochium to crush the physical yearnings of her nature in the effort to surrender herself more completely to Christ, he should feed her fantasy with such exciting images.\textsuperscript{174}

Jerome’s contemporaries Ambrose and Augustine also used the Song of Songs but Kelly comments that ‘while inevitably present the sexual overtones seem transposed in their exhortations’.\textsuperscript{175} In the context of scholarly anxiety about the eroticism of Jerome’s letter, Brown’s comment is salutary,

We moderns have become strangely prudish in our attitudes towards ecstasy and intellectual frissons. We conclude that such passages reveal in Jerome “his consummate sense of style, and his dirty mind.” But as we have already seen in the case of Augustine, late antique persons were less troubled than we are by the language of spiritual delight.\textsuperscript{176}

Further, there is no evidence that any of Jerome’s generally vociferous enemies took exception to the eroticism of this letter. Significantly, Eustochium is to be found praying and reading, till she falls asleep. The Bridegroom appears in a dream. That she should be praying is conventional for a dedicated virgin, but reading the Scriptures is Jerome’s particular concern for his women. Moreover she is smitten with caritas: a word of import to Christians.\textsuperscript{177} Letter 22 contains more than three hundred Scriptural references.\textsuperscript{178} I propose that Eustochium’s reading of the Scriptures interprets her encounter with the Bridegroom. The application of Scripture in providing a basis for behaviour is a recurring theme in Jerome’s letters and suggests a wider interpretation than that of the intensification of the erotic for the eradication of the female subject.

\textsuperscript{173} Song of Solomon, 5.2–5a, 6.
\textsuperscript{174} Kelly, Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies, 101; Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 28.
\textsuperscript{175} Ambrose, de Virgin. 12.72–4; Augustine, de sanc. Virgin.
\textsuperscript{176} Peter Brown, Through the Eye of a Needle (Princeton: PUP, 2012), 265. Pace Adkin, St Jerome on Virginity, 230.
\textsuperscript{177} See 1 Cor 13 and 35 above.
\textsuperscript{178} See Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, 79.
The following commentary elucidates Jerome’s employment of the erotic:


(It is difficult for the human spirit not to love something and it is necessary that our mind is drawn to some kind of affection. Carnal love is conquered by spiritual love: desire is quenched by desire. What is subtracted from the one, increases in the other. Because this is so, repeat frequently: “By night upon my couch I have sought him in whom my heart delights” and “Mortify your members on earth”, as the Apostle says.\(^{179}\))\(^{180}\)

‘Erotic sensibilities’ are for Jerome the only adequate way of expressing the anticipation of Christ’s kingdom, because they represent an intensity of human experience. The eroticism of the \textit{Song of Songs} transmutes into an expression of the soul’s entering sublime joy with Christ. For Jerome, I suggest, the marriage between a man and woman, by its mundanity, diminishes the intense sense of longing expressed in this sexual imagery. Something of this is conveyed when Jerome says, ‘Sit conversio illius ad maritum, quae virum non habet Christum, et ad extremum “morte morieris” finis iste coniugii’ (‘Let the desire be for the husband of her who does not have Christ as her man, and in the end “you will surely die” proclaims the end of the marriage’).\(^{181}\) Jerome is drawing a deliberate comparison here between \textit{maritum} and the favourable connotation of \textit{virum}, in the same way that he draws a contrast between \textit{femina} and \textit{mulier}.\(^{182}\) The quote taken from Gen 2.17 is not merely a warning of mortality. These are the words of the prohibition given to Adam and Eve in Eden. Judgment, death and marriage are, for Jerome, all consequences of original sin. However, he interpolated a

\(^{179}\) Col 3.5.
\(^{180}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.17.
\(^{181}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.18.
\(^{182}\) See 82–4 above.
gloss – ‘et sub viri potestate eris’ (‘and you will be under your husband’s authority’) – in his translation of Gen 3.16.\(^{183}\)

Politico-ecclesial and eschatological implications may be inferred from the marriage tropes. Christ comes to an undefiled Church (symbolised by the Bride-Eustochium) when ‘she’ is praying and reading the Scriptures. The eroticism of the *Song of Songs* intensifies a sense of anxiety at inconsolable loss and danger, if the Church/Bride goes out into the city and places herself under temporal authority which, I suggest, is a comment on imperial involvement in the Church. Such may be inferred from the following:

The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me,
They struck me and wounded me;
The guardsmen of the walls took away my shawl from me.\(^{184}\)

The Scriptural text ‘constructs erotic love in such a way that its climax is always deferred’ and the nature of love is ‘jealous and conjugal’.\(^{185}\) The warning operates at two levels, I propose: to Eustochium who must ‘mortify her flesh’ lest she fall, and to the Church of the danger of exclusion from the delight of God’s presence that ‘Virgin Israel’ suffered in exile.\(^{186}\) This yearning for consummation, and the fear of loss, entailed in the erotic imagery, function as a remedy for apostasy.

Moreover, the eroticism is removed from the immediately physical, in that it is not a waking fantasy. Both the Scriptural passage and Jerome’s description of Eustochium’s experience take place while the woman is sleeping.\(^{187}\) Cox Miller provides a helpful analysis of the interpretation of dreams is late antiquity where they could be understood as predictive, showing the consequences of present actions for the future; they were not deemed to be the product of the dreamer’s psyche but of a visitation, usually divine.\(^{188}\) Therefore, the dream represents ‘a text of desire’, because the dream ‘is a picture of a self that does not yet exist’.\(^{189}\) However, in my interpretation, this means that

\(^{183}\) *Conversio*, as Jerome uses it here takes up the conventional interpretation of ἀποστροφή in the LXX and teshūqāh (verb) in the Hebrew.

\(^{184}\) *Song of Solomon*, 5.7.


\(^{189}\) Ibid.
Eustochium’s present actions (reading, praying, separation, waiting) have consequences for the future in the joy of the Bridegroom’s presence; the heavenly destiny of a faithful Church, and also, by extension, the individual soul’s final bliss.

Jerome signals his own longing for union with Christ; that is, to be like Eustochium, a virgin in body and spirit. Cox Miller observes that, because Jerome has ‘written’ Eustochium in the tropes of the *Song of Songs*, he must find a suitable metaphor for his own spiritual state. She sees this as unsuccessful in that, aware of his own shortcomings, he encodes his theological yearnings as another kind of woman from Scripture to bridge the gap. This narrative too has sexually charged overtones. His spiritual bankruptcy and loss of virginity is expressed in terms of the sinful woman who washed Jesus’ feet: ‘Ita omni auxilio destitutus ad Iesu iacebam pedes, rigabam lacrimis, crine tergebam’ (‘Thus bereft of all aid, I would fling myself at Jesus’ feet, washing them with my tears and drying them with my hair’).

I consider that Jerome did regard this Scriptural trope as a successful way of ‘feminizing his body’ and his soul. He had already used this self-representation in his strange letter to the Virgins of Aemona, when he begged forgiveness for whatever had caused their refusal to answer his letters. His use of the same trope twice, suggests that, in fact, it was apposite for his understanding of himself. He has recognised his status before God: ‘Audenter loquor: cum omnia Deus possit, suscitare virginam non potest post ruinam’ (‘I aver boldly that although God can do anything he cannot raise up a virgin after she has fallen’). His ‘virginity’ cannot be restored, so he must look for mercy in the same way as the ‘fallen’ woman. The use of the two different women: the one to express the pure soul’s longing for union with God (the pure Eustochium); the other to represent the sinful soul’s longing for forgiveness (the woman in Luke’s Gospel), is valid. Moreover, the image of the two women may be extended to all Christians. Jerome may cast himself as mentor *extraordinaire* but his interpolation of himself into the text is an astonishing *exemplum* of the inversion of Roman pride, as he portrays his inmost self in feminine terms.

Jerome also employs the erotic in the remembered incident and dream to assert authority and instruct Eustochium on the way to glory through heroic struggle:

190 Ibid.
192 Ibid., quoting the incident described in Lk 7.37–8.
When I was living in the desert, in that vast solitude … inflamed by the burning heat of the sun, how many times did I imagine myself amid the delights of Rome! Although in my fear of hell I had condemned myself to this prison. With scorpions and wild beasts as my only companions, I was often surrounded by troops \textit{sic} of dancing girls. My skin was pale with fasting but, though my frame was chilled, my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust bubbled up while my flesh was barely alive. Helpless, I threw myself at the feet of Jesus, watered them with my tears, dried them with my hair, and I subdued my resistant body with weeks of fasting. I do not blush with shame in the face of my wretchedness, rather I lament aloud that I am not now what I used to be … I feared my cell as though it knew my thoughts.\textsuperscript{195}

Despite rigorous fasting, his cold body was not ‘matched by any cooling of desire’.\textsuperscript{196} On the contrary, he is beset by visions of dancing girls. A disconnection occurs between his body and his spirit, just as in the case of the false virgins. Cox Miller observes that Jerome describes the ‘gross physicality’ of his body in the same way that he wrote of women’s bodies.\textsuperscript{197} In fact, Jerome describes only pregnancy in terms of ‘gross physicality’. Unreconstructed women are usually rejected in terms of their allurement or pretensions to it.\textsuperscript{198}

Cox Miller, employing Kelly’s translation from a letter to Rusticus, argues that the solution to Jerome’s problem lay in language:

When I was a young man walled in by the solitude of the desert, I was unable to resist the allurements of vice and the hot passions of my nature. Although I tried to crush them with repeated fasting, my mind was in turmoil with sinful thoughts. To bring it under control, I made myself the pupil of a Christian convert from Judaism. After the subtlety of Quintilian, the flowing eloquence of Cicero, the dignified prose of

\textsuperscript{195} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.7. Cox Miller’s translation has been used here as this is her reference point: see Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 35.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 54.4; 107.11; 130.7; 22.13. See also Barr’s observation of Jerome’s translation of Genesis 84 above.
Fronto, the smooth grace of Pliny, I set myself to learn an alphabet and strove to pronounce hissing, breath demanding words.\textsuperscript{199}

She argues that just as Eustochium’s re-written body signified a chaste eroticism; Hebrew signified for Jerome the same eroticism, ‘with its “hissing” words that made him literally “pant” for breath’.\textsuperscript{200} However, the reference to the ‘huffing and puffing’ of learning Hebrew seems more likely intended to keep his Hebrew competence before the public.\textsuperscript{201} Further, he draws attention to his sacrifice in turning from literature that delights him, to the labour of the biblical languages.

I suggest Jerome’s purpose, the assertion of his authority, becomes clear as he ends his description of his memory of torment with a significant quote:

\begin{quote}
Post multas lacrimas, post caelo oculos inhaerentes nonnunquam videbar mihi interesse agminibus angelorum et laetus gaudensque cantabam;

“Post te in odorem unguentorum tuorum currimus”.
\end{quote}

(After many tears and sometimes fixing my eyes on heaven, I seemed to be in the midst of angelic hosts, and I sang in joyful praise, “I have pursued you into the perfume of your anointing oils”).\textsuperscript{202}

Jerome was given a taste of the heavenly life, after his struggles and mortification of the flesh. Further, in employing a gloss on the opening verses of the \textit{Song of Songs}, he returns to its tropes, now portraying himself as the Bride.\textsuperscript{203} He has become the pure soul, longing to have flesh subsumed by Spirit. Brown’s explanation sums up how sexual desire was resolved in the eastern ascetics:

\begin{quote}
To receive from Christ the grace of a transparent chastity was to shatter the last weapons of the unsurrendered will: it was to complete the transformation of the heart.\textsuperscript{204}
\end{quote}

Jerome is proclaiming himself as one who has conquered the flesh: an authentic holy man of the desert who can confidently point out the way of perfection. This view of himself is seen in his letter to Nepotian:

\textsuperscript{199} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 125.12; Kelly, \textit{Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies}, 50.
\textsuperscript{200} Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 38.
\textsuperscript{201} Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 122.2; 130.7.
\textsuperscript{202} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.7.
\textsuperscript{203} \textit{Song of Solomon}, 1.2–3.
\textsuperscript{204} Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 131.
Neque in illos tantum, sed et in nos ipsos severi iudices fuimus volentesque festucam de oculo alterius tollere nostram prius trabem eiecimus.

(We have been severe judges, not only of those other men but also of our very selves, and in desiring to remove the splinter from the eye of another, we have first of all wrenched the plank from our own.)

But what follows this memory is revelatory, because the focus switches back to Eustochium: ‘Si autem haec sustinent illi, qui exeso corpore solis cogitationibus oppugnantur, quid patitur puella, quae deliciis fruitur’ (‘However, if those men must endure these experiences, who, when the body is worn out, are assailed by evil thoughts, what must a girl endure who enjoys luxuries’). Eustochium is being challenged to participate in the heroic struggle for sanctity, as are all others who hear this letter. Jerome has gone before them into the desert, like a new Moses to show the way.

The dream, Jerome’s other ‘set piece’ to establish the authority of his desert experience and spiritual struggle, takes up the sexual imagery that his employment of the Song of Songs has already established as a major trope for the letter. The context of this struggle is, ‘dum ita me antiquus serpens inluderet’ (‘while the ancient serpent sported with me in this way’). ‘Inluderet’ repeats the earlier use of ‘ludat’ in ‘the Bridegroom will “sport” with Eustochium’. Jerome exploits the word ‘ludo’ and its cognates for their sexual overtones in relation to himself. However, I suggest his development of the term also occurs in the preface to his dream with a warning to Eustochium: ‘Nec tibi diserta multum velis videri aut lyricis festiva carminibus metro ludere’ (‘and do not desire to appear over articulate or play around with songs on the lyre set to idle verse’). Jerome satirises, as a warning, the affectation in pronunciation adopted by married women: ‘Adeo illis adulterium etiam linguae placet’ (‘Adultery, even adultery of the tongue is so attractive to them’). He then paraphrases Tertullian, ‘What has Horace to do with the Psalter, Virgil with the gospels, Cicero with the apostles?’ In comparison with the

205 Jerome, Ep. 52.17.
206 Jerome, Ep. 22.8.
207 See 159–61 below for Jerome’s assumption of the role of Moses.
208 Jerome, Ep. 22.30.
210 Jerome, Ep. 22.29.
211 Tertullian, De praes. haeret. 7.
polish of the authors of the classics, the writing in the Scriptures was harsh and uncivilised.\textsuperscript{212}

Delighting in pagan literature and speech may seduce the believer from the \textit{lectio divina}. This is adultery of the heart. In warning Eustochium against frivolous literature, Jerome is inviting her to renounce the Roman world, signified by its literature. In his letter to Rusticus, quoted above, Jerome depicts learning Hebrew as an antidote to this ‘adultery’ with pagan literature, since struggling to learn Hebrew contrasted so markedly to the delights of reading Quintilian, Cicero, Fronto and Pliny.\textsuperscript{213}

Cox Miller limits the dream and the memory to Jerome’s struggling with his carnality. She sees ‘desire’ as turning his body into a battleground where ‘Cicero and the dancing girls would not give way to Scripture and chastity, represented by the stylist and the monk’\textsuperscript{214}. Jerome’s imaginal body, like Eustochium’s, can now be constructed in Scriptural language. For Eustochium it was the language of the \textit{Song of Songs}; for Jerome it is turning from ‘secular to sacred literature’.\textsuperscript{215} I agree that Jerome’s body has become a ‘battleground’:

Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged up to the tribunal of a judge. Asked about my identity, I replied, “I am a Christian”. And he who sat [behind the tribunal] said, “You are lying; you are a Ciceronian, not a Christian, for where your treasure is, there is where your heart is also”. Immediately I became mute, and amid the flogging – for he had ordered that I be beaten – I was tortured more strongly by the fires of conscience, pondering within myself that verse, “In hell who shall acknowledge you?” Nevertheless I began to cry out and woefully to say: “Have mercy on me, Lord, have mercy on me.” Amid the lashings this sound rang out. Finally those who were standing around, falling down on their knees before the one who was presiding, begged that he have mercy on my youth and give me the opportunity for penitence. There would be more torture at a later point if I were ever again to read pagan literary books … I began to take an oath and, calling on his name as witness, I said: “Lord if at any time [in the future] I possess pagan


\textsuperscript{213} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 125.13.

\textsuperscript{214} Cox Miller, “The Blazing Body,” 40.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
writings or read them, I will have denied you.” Dismissed after this oath, I returned to the upper world … This was not an idle dream … My shoulders were black and blue, and I felt the bruises after I awoke from sleeping. Thenceforth I read the divine books with much more eagerness than I had read the books of human beings.216

The memory account above is full of violence done to the flesh: ‘nuda humo vix ossa haerentia conlidebam’ (‘I was striking my bones that barely held together on the bare earth’); ‘ad Iesu iacebam pedes’ (‘I flung myself at Jesus’ feet’); ‘ibi meae orationi locus, illud miserrimae carnis ergastulum’ (‘there, my place of prayer, became a place of torture for my unhappy flesh’).217 Similarly, in the dream of his judgment for his attachment to pagan authors, Jerome again undergoes violence to the body and spirit.

Ilico obmutui et inter verbera – nam caedi me iusserat – conscientiae magis igne torquebar illum mecum versiculum, reputans: “in inferno autem quis confitebitur tibi?”

(Straightaway I was struck dumb and amidst the beating – for he had ordered me to be flogged – I was in greater torment through the fire in my conscience, such that I pondered within myself on that verse, “Who will give praise to you in hell?”218)219

Every aspect of Roman culture must be surrendered to the authority of Christ, especially its literature, through which culture is shaped.220 The focus on the Scriptures and contemplation of the consequences of being repudiated by Christ enables the Christian to reject the world’s seductiveness. Jerome, through his suffering has triumphed over these attractions.

I suggest that this is more than an existential battle against the seductions of flesh and literature, since Jerome introduces a paradox: the flesh is so at odds with the divine that union can only be achieved by violence, yet there is no violence to the spirit in union with Christ:

217 Jerome, Ep. 22.7. Jerome’s vehement attacks on marriage and his threats were meant to steel Eustochium to adopt la vie parfaite. See Patrick Laurence, Jérôme et le nouveau modèle féminin. La conversion à la ‘vie parfaite’ (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1997).
218 Ps 6.5.
An non tibi videtur esse violentia, cum caro cupit esse, quod Deus est, et illuc, unde angeli corruerunt, angelos iudicatura conscendere.

(For, does it not seem as violence to you, when the flesh desires to be what God is, and to ascend to the place from where angels fell, where it will judge angels.\textsuperscript{221} \textsuperscript{222})

An eschatological theme is introduced. The flesh must be mastered before the Christian is fit to judge the angels and the wedding joy will be realised with the return of Christ:

Qualis erit illa dies, cum tibi Maria, mater domini, choris occurret comitata virgineis … Tunc et ipse sponsus occurret et dicet; “Surge, veni proxima mea, speciosa mea, columba mea, quia ecce hiemps transiit, pluvia abiit sibi.”

(What will that day be like, when Mary, the mother of the Lord, comes to meet you accompanied by bands of virgins? … Then your bridegroom, himself, will come to meet you, saying, “Rise up my dearest, my lovely one, my dove and come since behold the winter is over, the rain has passed”.\textsuperscript{223} \textsuperscript{224})

Moreover, the bruises he sustained have multiple applications. Initially they are symptoms of a ‘divided heart’.\textsuperscript{225} In his dream, he stands condemned by the Scriptures, ‘For where your treasure is there will your heart be also’.\textsuperscript{226} But the wounds become indicators of how ‘the flesh becomes what God is’. The dream then becomes an assertion of spiritual authority. Its preface, ‘subito raptus in spiritu’ (‘suddenly I was caught up in the spirit’) echoes Paul’s words, ‘et scio hominem … raptus est in paradisum’ (‘I know a man … who was caught up to paradise’).\textsuperscript{227} Identification with Paul asserts his claim to spiritual authority.\textsuperscript{228} Paul, too, was beaten as Jerome later describes, expecting readers to make the association.\textsuperscript{229}

\textsuperscript{221} 1 Cor 6.3.
\textsuperscript{222} Jerome, \textit{Ep.}, 22.40.
\textsuperscript{223} See \textit{Song of Songs}, 2.10.
\textsuperscript{224} Jerome, \textit{Ep.}, 22.41.
\textsuperscript{225} For a thorough account of the ‘divided heart’ from Jewish writings through to the NT, see Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 33–57.
\textsuperscript{226} Mt 6.21.
\textsuperscript{227} 2 Cor 12.3–4.
\textsuperscript{228} See 17–19 above.
\textsuperscript{229} Jerome, \textit{Ep.}, 22.40; 2 Cor 11.24.
This reading is consistent with Neil Adkin’s reminder that Jerome’s response, ‘Christianus sum’ to the question of his condicio, was the martyr’s standard reply.\textsuperscript{230} In these words, Jerome is appropriating the martyr’s authority and his deliverance from carnality of body and mind, denoted by the bevy of girls and the pagan texts. But even more, I maintain, he is claiming a Christ-likeness in the beatings and in his triumph over his physical and spiritual alienation in the wilderness, and the apostolic authority of Paul.\textsuperscript{231}

\textbf{Jerome’s Use of Pagan Literature}

Given Jerome’s professed rejection of pagan authors, what is to be made of his employment of the great literary trinity of Horace, Cicero and Virgil, even within this letter?\textsuperscript{232} Mohr provides a well-argued evaluation of Jerome’s use of the classics.\textsuperscript{233} She draws attention to the importance of historical context. Thus Letter 22 highlights Jerome’s youthful struggles at least ten years after the event, during a resurgence of pagan activity in Rome when Praetextatus attempted to rescind Gratian’s outlawing of funding for the state cults.\textsuperscript{234} Political tensions between pagans and Christians make Jerome’s absolutism about classical authors understandable and also account for Jerome’s unseemly joy at Praetextatus’s death.\textsuperscript{235} I propose that Jerome again asserts his spiritual authority, demanding a break, not only from family but also ‘the demons of the Chaldeans’, the foundations of Rome’s cultural past that will lead others astray.\textsuperscript{236}

I propose that a further cause for Jerome’s absolutism was the contemporary popularity of Faltonia Betitia Proba’s \textit{Cento Virgilianus de laudibus Christi}, which Jerome would later attack.\textsuperscript{237} The \textit{Cento} sought to synthesise the pagan classics and the Scriptures in confirming the hope of a Golden Age – the very antithesis of Jerome’s eschatological focus on the resurrection and ‘living as the angels’.

\textsuperscript{231} For the Christ’s scourging, see Mt 27.26; Mark 15.15, Lk 18.33; John 19.1; and his temptation in the wilderness see Mt 4.1; Mark 1.12; Lk 4.1.
\textsuperscript{232} These three are the most frequently quoted by Jerome. See Hagendahl, \textit{Latin Fathers and the Classics}, 110.
\textsuperscript{235} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.4.
\textsuperscript{236} Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 22.1; 21.13.
Jerome’s reply in 397 to a challenge by Magnus, the chief rhetor at Rome, on the use of pagan literature, is central to understanding the perceived ambiguity of Jerome’s attitude to the pagan literature.238 Mohr again draws attention to context, where a seemingly more relaxed attitude emerges. Jerome points out that other Christians have used pagan authors; even Paul had recourse to Epimenides (Titus 1.12), Menander (1 Cor 15.33) and Aratus (Acts 17.28).239 The threat of paganism was now diminishing, although Christians were still divided in their attitude to the classics.240 Jerome reuses the trope of the captive woman’s incorporation into Israel from Deut 21.10–13, first encountered in a letter to Damasus, a year before the letter to Eustochium.241 Jerome advocates the employment of classics, shorn of the dangerous delights of their pagan past, like a beautiful, captive woman, her hair shorn and finger nails clipped. Jerome expresses this employment of the classics in the service of Christianity thus: ‘labor meus in familiam Christi proficit, stuprum in alienam auget numerum conservorum’ (‘my labour profits Christ’s family, fornication with a foreign woman increases the number of fellow servants’).242

Mohr helpfully analyses the constants in Jerome’s attitude that are useful in developing this thesis. First, she rejects the idea of Jerome oscillating between rigidity and liberalism, arguing that ‘Jerome seems never to have swerved from the opinion that to read the classical authors for themselves is not the work of a Christian’, though they may be used to further Christian aims.243 Second, taking up the conceit of stuprum in alienam, Jerome asserts the ‘captive woman’ must be allied with a reliable exegete of Scripture, doubtless to avoid the follies of Proba’s Cento.244 Third, Jerome uses Virgil, in particular, to further his ascetic programme. Mohr draws attention to Jerome’s linking of Abraham and Aeneas in abandoning their homeland.245 The employment of Dido, as a motif, is ambiguous. Passion threatens to deflect two honourable people, Aeneas and Dido, from their destiny yet Dido is initially an example of chaste resolution in her flight from Iarbas, leading her people to Carthage: ‘dux femina facti’ (‘a woman is the leader of the enterprise’).246 Jerome employs this phrase to shame

238 Jerome, Ep. 22.29.
239 Jerome, Ep. 70.2.
242 Jerome, Ep. 70.2.
243 Mohr, “Jerome, Virgil, and the Captive Maiden,” 313. They may cause the weaker brother to sin, 309.
244 Ibid.
245 Jerome, Ep. 66.1.
Julianus and Rusticus, who were faltering in their ascetic commitment. Yet, Jerome is showing a continuum with some values from the past:

Whenever he recommends virginity or preaches against remarriage, Jerome has to keep his critics in mind. His marshalling of Virgil in his support would have had great emotive force for classically-educated, traditionally-minded Christians.

Thus Jerome takes up the ancient ideal that a woman should not remarry and extends it to men.

How, then, does Jerome employ his favourite literary trio in this letter? Horace, the most quoted of the poetic satirists in late antiquity, is also a lyricist and member of the coterie that heralded the new Rome under Augustus. In Jerome’s dream, his work is paralleled with the Psalms. Jerome used the lyrical Psalm 45 and the Song of Songs to immortalise Eustochium, as the forerunner of another Rome for which heaven is the ultimate destiny. But he employs Horace’s satirical style in attacking the old Roman values. While Horace derides the folly of illicit passion, Jerome takes the topos further to attack ‘respectable’ married life. On occasion, Horace also provides the apposite phrase – ‘Quod monstror digito praetereuntium’ – which is echoed by Jerome in the following line: ‘… ne ad te obvia praetereuntium turba consistat et digito demonstreris’ (... lest a crowd of passers-by encounter you on the way and point at you.)

Jerome’s debt to Cicero was mentioned above. As the great prose writer and expositor of philosophy, he is appropriately joined to the Apostle (Paul). But Jerome had rejected the classics as sources of philosophy:

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247 Jerome, Ep. 118.7; 122.4, respectively.
250 Wiesen, Jerome as Satirist, 9.
251 Horace, Sermon 1.2.21–22. See the study in Warren S. Smith, “Advice on Sex by the Self-Defeating Satirists,” in Satiric Advice on Woman and Marriage, ed. Smith.
252 Horace, Carmen 4.3.22.
253 Jerome, Ep. 22.27.
254 See 31; 45; 95 above.
Jerome had bemoaned the seductive nature of the letters of Cicero, yet he uses the epistolary genre not only to promote his *veritas Hebraica*, but also to transform the writing of letters into a vehicle for exegesis of the Scriptures, the catalyst for change in Rome. Much of Jerome’s invective is in the style of Cicero and he employs forensic rhetoric to attack the enemies of asceticism. Further, Cicero, like Horace, had satirised marriage, recounting a story of a Sicilian who, on being told that his wife had hanged herself from a fig tree, replied, ‘Amabo te, da mihi ex ista arbore quos seram surculos’ (‘Please give me some shoots from that tree, which I shall plant’). While Jerome seemingly rejects these two authors, their satire on customs and marriage were familiar to a sophisticated readership, so Jerome is implicitly drawing attention to a connection with the past, while advocating a radical future.

However, it is the third member of the literary trinity, Virgil, whose phrases, tropes, narrative and form, Jerome reworks in Letter 22. Virgil is juxtaposed with the Gospels. His works were authoritative for the whole of Roman culture. The Gospels were the words of Jesus; the *Aeneid* proclaimed Virgil as the prophet of the old Rome. Jerome is the prophet of the new. Eustochium is not simply a projection of Jerome’s sexual desires. She, like Aeneas is the hero, but now the epic struggle is for a new Christian

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Rome, foreshadowing the heavenly Rome. Through her father, Toxotius, she is eminently suited to the role, as a descendant of Aeneas.\footnote{Jerome, Ep. 108.4.}

I suggest that Jerome expects his erudite readers to make the link with Virgil in the opening to the letter: ‘Audi, filia, et vide et inclina aurem tuam et oblivisere populum tuum et domum patris tuui’ (‘Hear, daughter, look and incline your ear; forget your own people and your father’s house’).\footnote{Jerome, Ep. 22.1, quoting Ps 44 from the Vulgate.} Aeneas, too, although initially held back by his father Anchises, must abandon all that he has known as a prince of Troy.\footnote{Virgil, Aen. 2.687–704.} His journey to glory involved suffering: the loss of Creusa; the desire for Dido; the damnation of the unburied helmsman, Palinurus; and the great conflict with Turnus. His ultimate destiny is always under threat. So, too with Eustochium:

Nolo tibi venire superbiam de proposito, sed timorem. Onusta incedis auro, latro vitandus est.

(I do not want pride but fear to result from your vow. If you go about laden with gold the thief must be evaded.)\footnote{Jerome, Ep. 22.3.}

Eustochium is warned of the danger of desire in Virgilian language: ‘statim ut libid.o titillaverit sensum, ut blandum voluptatis incendium dulci nos calore perfuderit’ (‘as soon as desire will have titillated feeling, so that the delightful fire of pleasure will have poured over us with its sweet heat’).\footnote{Jerome, Ep. 22.6.} Jerome picks up the Virgilian trope of the effect of flame of desire on Dido: ‘mollis flamma medullas’ (‘when the soft flame consumes her marrow’).\footnote{Virgil, Aen. 4.172.} This flame seals Dido’s fate, while Aeneas is only temporarily deflected from his destiny. Dido pretends that her unchastity is coniugium, although there had been no consent from both parties to live together, in accordance with Roman law. Her transgression (culpa) is compounded by pretending the liason is a marriage, in order to preserve her honour: ‘coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam’ (‘she calls it marriage, and by this name conceals her sin’).\footnote{For this convincing interpretation, see J. L. Moles, “Aristotle and Dido’s Hamartia,” Greece and Rome XXXI, no. 1 (1984): 53. Virgil, Aen. 4.172.} Dido represents the false virgin who seeks to cover her sin with a lie. The inference is clear to the educated reader that Eustochium’s ‘fiery body’ is her challenge to overcome.
The most significant use of Virgil, I propose, is to employ his poetic form to counter pagan understanding. Echoes of Virgil permeate Jerome’s dream and his memory, the principal locations of the struggle topos.²⁶⁶ Thierry argues that the form of the judgment resembles the tribunal of King Radamanthys in Tartarus.²⁶⁷ Tertullian, also, had seen a similarity between the tribunal in the pagan underworld and the Last Judgment.²⁶⁸

Clearly, however, the judge is Christ, because the tribunal has ‘tantum lumenis et tantum erat ex circumstantium claritate fulgoris’ (‘so much light, and so great was it emanating from the dazzling radiance of those standing about’).²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, I consider that Jerome is seeing heaven from the perspective of a hellish nightmare in a pagan underworld that he invests with Christian meaning.²⁷⁰ The fever that precipitated Jerome’s fearful dream is described in Virgilian borrowings. It spread to his ‘medullis infusa febris’ (‘bone marrow’).²⁷¹ Thierry compares ‘infelicia membra depasta est’ (‘my pitiful limbs were eaten up’) with ‘miseros morsu depascitur artus arida febris’ (‘a dry fever gnawed at my pitiful limbs’).²⁷² Why then does Jerome use these pagan intertexts and allusions to shape his narrative? I have stressed above the Christian elements of the judgment and the authority that Jerome derives from it.²⁷³ However, Jerome skilfully uses Virgil to imply the horrors of a pagan hell, a place that he begs to ascend from ad superos (to those above, namely the living).²⁷⁴ Tisiphone was present to scourge traitors in Tartarus, as Jerome is scourged for his betrayal of Christ.²⁷⁵ The resonances of Virgil, I suggest, illustrate the folly of depending on Virgil or the pagan writers for hope in the afterlife. He had rejected the pagan Weltanschauung of its philosophers and authors: ‘Daemonum cibus est carmina poetae, saecularis sapienta, rhetorico pompa verborum’ (‘Food for demons are the songs of poets, the wisdom of the age and the empty display of the rhetoricians’ words’).²⁷⁶

²⁶⁸ Tertullian, Apol. 3.13; 47.12: ‘For, like us, the poets and philosophers set up a judgment tribunal in the realms below.’
²⁷⁰ See Lk 16.23–24, where, from hell, Dives was able to see Lazarus in the glory of heaven.
²⁷¹ Jerome, Ep. 22.30.
²⁷³ See 118 above.
²⁷⁴ Cf. Aen. 6.568: ‘apud superos’ (‘among those above, that is, the living’).
²⁷⁵ Ibid., 570–571.
Virgil’s account of the Underworld with its combination of myth and Hellenic philosophy ends on a slightly sceptical note concerning the gods.\(^{277}\) Moreover, Palinurus’ hope for mercy had been sternly rebuked by the Sybil: ‘desine fata deum flecti sperare precando’ (‘cease to hope that the will of the gods is altered by prayer’).\(^{278}\) Jerome had read Cicero for solace in the desert but Cicero’s style and reflections on philosophy failed him. Virgil’s knowledge and vision also proved inadequate. Jerome is saved by calling on the Psalms and God’s mercy. He is brought to repentance and forgiveness by experiencing the consequences of inordinate love of the pagan writers in a pagan underworld.

But echoes of *Aeneid* 6 serve another purpose. Anchises appears, delivering to Aeneas the prophecy that encapsulates the destiny and pride of Rome:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;} \\
&\text{Hae tibi erunt artes; pacique imponere morem} \\
&\text{Parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Roman, remember to rule the nations with authority;  
These will be your skills: to impose order on a basis of peace,  
To spare the subject, and to conquer the proud.)\(^{279}\)

For Eustochium, as a type of the faithful Church, there is the promise of a new kingdom, when ‘caro … dissoluta et venerit princeps mundi istius’ (‘flesh … has been dissolved and the prince of this world comes’).\(^{280}\) In contrast, this new Rome will be based on a humble virgin, not the proud authority of the warrior.

Victorious Aeneas enters his kingdom and obtains a bride; all is achieved through ‘violence’. Keith makes the point that, in Roman literature, the death of a beautiful woman brings about political change in Rome.\(^{281}\) For example, the death of Lucretia precipitates the demise of Rome’s monarchy; the death of Camilla, rather than that of Turnus, signals the inevitable defeat of the Latins and the transition from pastoral to city


\(^{278}\) Virgil, *Aen.* 6.376.


life. Verginia’s death, at the hands of her father, rouses the Roman populace to overthrow the *decemviri*. Each of these women exhibits a singular chastity. In order to bring about change, Eustochium has to undergo a metaphorical death and resurrection. She must be changed from black to white:

“Qui facit peccatum, de Diablo est.” Tali primum parente generati nigri sumus et post paenitentiam necdum culmine virtutis ascenso dicimus: “Nigra sum et speciosa filia Hierusalem.”

(“Whoever sins is from the Devil.” Born of such a parent, we are black at first, and even after repentance, while not yet climbing to the height of virtue, we say, “I am black and comely, a daughter of Jerusalem.”)

Because Eustochium has ‘married’ Christ, she will be ‘dealbata’ (‘made white’) by the Bridegroom. In leaving her past life, she has ‘died’, thus heralding a new Rome. Cox Miller has seen this as the eradicating of Eustochium. But in the context, Eustochium is a type of every soul that must be changed.

Eustochium enters a kingdom as a bride. The ‘violence’, by which she enters, though different from that of Aeneas, is appropriate for entry into the kingdom of Christ. Jerome has told her that the hope of the ‘crown’ lies elsewhere:

Non est nobis conluctatio advesus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principatus et potestates huius mundi et harum tenebrarum, adversus spiritalia nequitiae in caelestibus.

(For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of this world’s darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.)

This passage points to the new age that will immediately precede the return of Christ and so is intrinsic to Jerome’s eschatology and linked to his political aims. The aim of Jerome’s call to virginity is a diminished population that will hasten the return of Christ to a world prepared for the angelic life.

284 Jerome, Ep. 22.1; John 8.4; *Song of Solomon*, 1.5.
285 Jerome, Ep. 22.1
286 See 74–75 above.
The Triumph of the Betrothed

It is significant that Eustochium’s entry into heaven to meet her Bridegroom merges, not into a Roman triumph, but with Christ’s entry into the new Jerusalem: ‘Tunc vere super asinam dominus ascendet et cælestem ingredietur Hierusalem’ (‘Then truly will the Lord mount upon his ass and enter the heavenly Jerusalem’). The lack of any pagan literary references deliberately differentiates between the world of Virgil’s Tartarus and the eschatological hope of the Christian. ‘Tunc’ is repeated seven times introducing each new phase of the glorious culmination as the celibate life begun on earth is fully realised in heaven.

Neglect of the triumphant ending to Letter 22, by focusing exclusively on erotic sensibilities, I maintain, misses the glory promised to Eustochium. It may not be an attractive path for many, but in its cultural context it had great appeal. Jane Simpson warns against judging the women by the standards of ‘post-pill’ feminism. The struggle and deprivation will come to a joyous end, described almost lyrically by Jerome; his account peppered with phrases from the Song of Songs:


(Then the angels will marvel, saying, “Who is this, heralding like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, matchless as the sun.” Then another chaste band will meet you: Sara will come with the married; Anna, the daughter of Phanuel with the widows. In separate groups you will see your mother in the flesh, and your spiritual mother.)

This is the triumphal approach of the queen. She will be in the company of, but superior even to, her own mother(s), Paula her birth mother, and Marcella, her spiritual mother. This is the final reversal of traditional patterns of obedience and honour.

290 Song of Songs, 6:9.
291 Jerome, Ep. 22:41
As the letter concludes, Eustochium is the heroine, who has come through the ‘violence’ of subjugating the flesh to her deserved reward and honoured above her family by a panoply of heroines from the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{292} No mere cipher to Jerome’s religious and sexually repressed longings, she obtains an eternal status and heroic standing that transcends the life of the pagan or the worldly Christian. Her triumph ends in a promise of love, not violence: ‘Aqua multa non poterit extinguere caritatem et flumina non cooperient eam’ (‘Many waters will not be able to extinguish love and the rivers cannot drown it’).\textsuperscript{293}

\textit{The ‘Real’ Eustochium}

The following chapter deals with the extent to which the ‘real’ women of antiquity can be known from the writings of men. We have glimpses of the ‘real’ Eustochium even as the embodiment of Jerome’s ideals, since she must be young, beautiful, rich and learned, or her symbolic value is lost.

Cox Miller cites a letter Jerome wrote in response to gifts – doves, cherries and bracelets, marking the festival of St Peter – as evidence that Eustochium had discerned the erotic underpinnings of her mentor’s ascetic advice.\textsuperscript{294} Rebenich’s interpretation of these gifts and letters, as reflecting the sophisticated practice of aristocratic patronage, seems more in keeping with Jerome’s reply.\textsuperscript{295} Especially as Jerome would later send a copy to Marcella, which is hardly the action of one potentially compromised.\textsuperscript{296} Because the gifts are capable of multiple Christian interpretations, Eustochium appears as a clever girl, adept at her role of patron.

Eustochium did not, in fact, live out her life in the cubiculum of a Roman palace, despite Jerome’s construction of her, but in the public arena of a monastery on a busy pilgrimage trail.\textsuperscript{297} Jerome continued to show confidence in her learning by dedicating his commentaries to her and accepting suggestions.\textsuperscript{298} After Paula’s death, Jerome was dependent on Eustochium and was devastated by her sudden death.\textsuperscript{299} She never forgot her own nobilitas or her authority as a patron. When the monastery at Bethlehem was

\textsuperscript{292} Jerome has already portrayed a woman as a hero of faith in Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 1.
\textsuperscript{293} \textit{Song of Songs}, 8.7.
\textsuperscript{294} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 31.1.
\textsuperscript{295} Rebenich, \textit{Jerome}, 150ff.
\textsuperscript{296} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 32.1.
\textsuperscript{297} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 66.3.
\textsuperscript{298} See Prologue, Ronald E. Heine, ed. \textit{The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians} (Oxford: OUP, 2002).
\textsuperscript{299} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 151.2; 32. See Kelly, \textit{Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies}, 328.
attacked, Eustochium and her niece, Paula, immediately corresponded with Pope Innocent.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep. 137, From Pope Innocent to John, Bishop of Jerusalem.}} The pope expressed regret to Jerome, but it was the status of the women, rather than Jerome’s reputation that prompted Innocent’s letter of rebuke to John of Jerusalem.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep. 136, From Pope Innocent to Jerome.}}

In Letter 22, Jerome has taken formularies of the epideictic and the paraenetic letter and the great cultural narrative of Rome in the \textit{Aeneid} to create a new socio-political narrative for Rome predicated on his eschatology with a dedicated virgin as the centrepiece.
Chapter 4: Demetrias and the Aniciae – Powerful Women

In 410, Alaric and his Goths had descended upon Rome. Among those who fled with considerable resources were three generations of women from the powerful Roman gens Anicia: Anicia Faltonia Proba, her daughter-in-law Juliana and Demetrias, her granddaughter, heiress to the clan’s fortunes.¹ Demetrias had broken her engagement and become a dedicated virgin after her arrival in North Africa.² These women had the rank and money to exercise patronage financially, politically and ecclesially even in exile.³

In 414, Jerome wrote a letter to Demetrias, at the behest of her grandmother, Proba, who sought spiritual advice for the newly consecrated virgin. This letter was written during the theological dispute where Jerome and Augustine were aligned against Pelagius. Jerome would cite it as the complement to his letter to Eustochium.⁴

Evaluations of Letter 130 vary. Cain perceives Jerome’s ‘writing’ of Demetrias as the typical struggle among elite males for pre-eminence, in this instance, as a spiritual mentor.⁵ Competition is a factor, because Demetrias also received a paraenetic letter from Pelagius, again at the invitation of her mother.⁶ Although Jerome did not initiate the contact, Anne Kurdock regards the letter as essentially a bid for patronage.⁷ Evidence supports this estimate, but Jerome’s letters all function at a number of levels.⁸ Rees dismisses the letter as a pale imitation of the treatise to Eustochium:

Rhetoric apart, this letter of Jerome’s [sic] is an unexceptionable but quite unremarkable piece of moral instruction, which an old hand like its

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¹ For the power of the Anicii, see M. T. W. Arnheim, The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire (Oxford: OUP, 1972), 50.
² Jerome, Ep. 130.5.
⁴ Jerome, Ep. 130.19.
⁶ Pelagius, Ad Demetr. 30.
⁷ Kurdock, “Demetrias, Ancilla Dei and the Problem of the Missing Patron.”
⁸ See Ch. 3 above for Jerome’s exploitation of the paraenetic letter.
writer would be able to turn out on demand every day of the week, and I would rate it no higher than a beta plus.\textsuperscript{9}

Yet Kelly regards it as one of Jerome’s most ‘impressive literary constructions’, not least for the restraint of its delivery.\textsuperscript{10} I suggest that this letter has been undervalued by scholars, especially with regard to the rhetorical skill required in negotiating the intricate relationships present, and the expansion of Jerome’s vision for Rome, transformed in anticipation of the return of Christ.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated how Jerome wrote women to present various personae or to live down incidents in his past. Recent scholarship has been sceptical about whether anything can be discovered of the real woman. Seeking to explore Jerome’s attitude to his female correspondents and the benefits that may flow to them from that association is problematic. We have already, however, had cause for some optimism for discerning traces of Jerome’s women beyond the intended construction of them in his letters. Although Eustochium was idealised as Jerome’s paradigmatic virgin for his political, social and ecclesial ends, glimpses may be had of her through both the text and external sources, suggesting that Jerome was not in complete control, not least because of Eustochium’s rank.\textsuperscript{11}

Demetrias also is a betrothed to Christ. Yet, she differs from Eustochium in significant ways that provide additional insights into the question of the agency of women. We meet Demetrias at the end of Jerome’s life. Living in North Africa, not Rome, she is seen in the context of a powerful and wealthy clan, whose dominant members are women, politically active in the Church and society, at a time when Jerome was ill, lacking patrons and under threat.\textsuperscript{12} A study of the three Anician women provides a rich source for considering the issues raised in this thesis by the ‘linguistic turn’.\textsuperscript{13}

Jacobs makes a useful start in employing Spiegel’s insights to discover Demetrias as a dedicated virgin. Arguably, there are more important elements of the ‘social logic’ of her local culture that may be discovered: social institutions of marriage; mechanisms of


\textsuperscript{10} J. N. D. Kelly, \textit{Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies} (Oxford: Duckworth, 1975), 312.

\textsuperscript{11} See 124 above.

\textsuperscript{12} See the prologues to \textit{Comm. in Es.} and \textit{In Hiez}. See also Kelly, \textit{Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies}, 299.

\textsuperscript{13} See definition, 24–7 above.
wealth distribution and associated patronage structures; the conventions of rhetoric; and
gender relations among the Roman elite. Jerome employed the rhetoric of his elitist
education to enhance his reputation, but in promoting asceticism he reinterpreted these
institutions. Thus, significant continuity exists between the themes we have explored
relating to Eustochium and Jerome’s correspondence with Demetrias. An important
difference lies in the greater opportunities that the social prominence of the Aniciae
gave them to exercise agency and to modify Jerome’s attempts to construct them in
accordance with his aims.

Patronage is a social reality in Jerome’s letters. Letter 130 becomes ‘contestatory’ as it
reveals a negotiation for authority, between his status as a scholar, and the power
inherent in the rank and wealth of the women. Employing his rhetorical skill to establish
himself as a client worthy of their support, he also contests that role, seeking to be
perceived in a relationship of greater equality. Further, the letter is sent against the
background of a theological dispute that may render the women vulnerable. Despite
their privilege, they may have put the gens in a precarious position by exercising
patronage to an alleged heretic, Pelagius. Thus, Jerome brings a certain amount of
power to the engagement with the Aniciae as an opponent of Pelagius and an ally of
Augustine.

The women contest Jerome’s text in that he needs to position himself in their network
for the expensive maintenance of his two monasteries in Bethlehem, his scholarship and
the extension of his large library. His major sponsors Paula, Pammachius and
Marcella had all died in the previous decade. He was also in need of political and
ecclesial protection, since he was under attack from John of Jerusalem who now
protected Pelagius. But he could not simply use the women to show off his mentoring
skills (though he does this), nor to eulogise them as befits a client. He must convince
them that he is superior and more orthodox than Pelagius. However, he had hitherto
maintained a hostile attitude to the gens Anicia. This antipathy has been given little
attention by scholars in assessing the agency of the women and how it shapes Jerome’s
text. Jerome was obliged to write in such a way that he incorporated these women into
his vision for Rome and avoided accusations of sycophancy and betraying his

14 The teachings of Caelestius, one of Pelagius’ more enthusiastic and extreme supporters, had been
condemned at a synod in Carthage around 411.
15 See 11 above.
principles. But he must also maintain the status that he has been cultivating as an amicus rather than client.

The need for financial and political backing notwithstanding, this was his last chance to rehearse his vision for Rome through the trope of a virgin of the nobilitas. Demetrias was to be the flag-bearer of asceticism for a new generation, as Eustochium was for hers. He again boldly writes the betrothed in Virgilian tropes, but also includes her mother and grandmother, offering them an even greater glory than membership of an illustrious domus. He can only succeed in this if the women bring erudition to the engagement, which Jerome, in turn, honours in the breadth of his use of classical and theological allusions. This sharing of his scholarship, I will argue, challenges the understanding that women were simply called upon to demonstrate praxis.\footnote{See Teresa M. Shaw, “Askesis and the Appearance of Holiness,” \textit{JECS} 6, no. 3 (1998): 485–500. For a view that Jerome provides very little askesis, see Andrew S. Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” \textit{ChHist.} 69, no. 4 (2000): 735.}

\textit{A New Betrothed for a New Generation}

Jerome’s opening to the letter is assertive but at the same time fulsome, as he struggles to strike the right note:

Inter omnes materias, quas ab adulescentia usque ad hanc aetatem, vel mea, vel notariorum scripsi manu, nihil praesenti opera difficilius. Scripturus enim ad Demetriadem virginem Christi, quae et nobilitate et divitiis, prima est in orbe Romano, si cuncta virtutibus eius congrua dixero, adulari putabor; si quaedam subtraxero, ne incredibilia videantur, damnnum laudibus eius mea faciet verecundia. Quid igitur faciam? Quod implere non possum, negare non audeo.

(Of all the subjects that I have written about from my youth even until my present age, whether in my own hand or that of my secretaries, nothing has been more difficult than this present task. For I am about to write to Demetrias, a virgin of Christ, who, both by virtue of her noble status and wealth, is pre-eminent in the Roman world. If I were to mention all that accords with her virtues, I shall be regarded as flattering her; and if I hold back some details in case they might appear incredible,
my reticence will diminish her merits. What am I to do then? I am unequal to the task before me, yet I cannot venture to decline it.)

He admits that he has never met Demetrias but assumes her virtue and her ‘merits’, in conventional terms, acknowledging her rank and wealth, which were of such a magnitude that to say that she was ‘pre-eminence in the Roman world’ was no more than the truth. The opening is somewhat muted. He neatly, though somewhat ambiguously, resorts to Cicero to cover any omissions. However, Jerome also establishes his authority as a mentor by intimating his ability to enhance Demetrias’ reputation:

Neque enim ut novum et praecipuum quiddam a me flagitant, cuius ingenium in huiuscemodi materiis saepe detritum est; sed ne vocis meae, pro virili parte, desit testimonium in eius virtutibus explicandis, cuius ut inclyti oratoris utar sententia: “Spes magis laudanda quam res est.”

(For, indeed, they do not request of me anything new or out of the ordinary, as my wits have often been exhausted on matters such as these. But so that any testimony from my lips is to the utmost of my ability and does not fail in bearing witness to her virtues, I shall use the maxim of the great orator of her: “The hope of what she will become is greater than the present reality.”)

Jerome’s subsequent reference to Demetrias’ illustrious consular antecedents is not gratuitous flattery but in keeping with his hopes for a Christian Rome founded on its aristocracy. Rome itself had been attacked but his vision has long extended to the provinces beyond. Demetrias’ decision, he claims, has already had cosmic significance:

Cunctae per Africam ecclesiae quodam exultavere tripudio. Non solum ad urbes, oppida, viculosque; sed ad ipsa quoque mappalia, celebris fama penetravit. Omnes inter Africam Italianque insulae hoc rumore repletae sunt, et inoffenso pede, longius gaudia cucurrere. Tunc lugubres

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17 Jerome, Ep. 130.1.
18 Jerome, Ep. 130.1, quoting Cicero, De re publica, Frag. 5. This is the first of a number of possibly barbed remarks by Jerome.
19 See Jerome, Ep. 130.3 and ‘Jerome’s Manifesto’, 77; 105; 116 above.
vestes Italia mutavit, et semiruta urbis Romae moenia pristinum ex parte recepere fulgorem, propitium sibi aestimantes Deum, in alunnae conversione perfecta.

(All the churches throughout Africa joyfully celebrated one way or another. The fame penetrated not only into the cities, towns and villages but also into the very huts. All the islands between Africa and Italy were filled with the rumour of it, and the joy of it rushed further abroad without impediment. Then Italy changed out of its mourning clothes, and the half-collapsed walls of Rome recovered, in part, their splendour, believing God was again well disposed to them as a result of the full conversion of their former daughter.)

Jerome expands this hyperbolic conceit. The consecration of Demetrias brings more joy to a war-torn Empire than even Marcellus’ victory over Hannibal, or the defeat of Brennus’ Gauls had to earlier generations. Reflecting Jerome’s view of the transcendental nature of virginity, it places the young woman among Rome’s gallery of male heroes, so that Jerome reformulates the Roman nobilitas by elevating the humblest member to the glory, previously only enjoyed by men at the peak of their political and military powers. Its fulsomeness satisfies the requirements of a patron but enables Jerome to fulfil his own vision to change the understanding of gloria, for we encounter here the first intimation that Jerome will take Virgil’s great narrative and submit it to the ascetic discourse, just as he did in the letter to Eustochium. Throughout Letter 130, Jerome will apply the tropes and narrative of the Aeneid to the Aniciae. Like Aeneas, Demetrias and her family have fled from a burning city. But, in the passage above, Jerome reworks the Aeneid to create an ascetic exemplum. Africa is once again the backdrop, as the fama of Demetrias’ vow of chastity brings joy and hope to a war-torn world, especially the towns and dwellings of Africa. In Aeneid 4, the fama of Dido’s illicit passion also spreads abroad throughout the cities of Africa:

   Extemplo Libyae magnas it Fama per urbes,
   Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullum.

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22 Jerome, Ep. 130.6. Jerome uses this hyperbole for joy on other occasions (Ep. 1) but it takes on an added significance in the present context.  
23 See 117ff. above
(Immediately Rumour goes through Libya’s great cities, 
Rumour, no other evil travels swifter.)²⁴

This rumour reaches Iarbas, Dido’s spurned suitor, who in a jealous rage vows war and destruction. *Fama* also spreads through the city of Carthage on the occasion of Dido’s suicide:

concussam bacchatur Fama per urbem.  
lamentis gemituque et femineo ululatu  
tecta fremunt, resonat magnis plangoribus aether,  
non aliter quam si immissis ruat hostibus omnis  
Karthago aut antiqua Tyros, flammaeque furentes  
culmina perque hominum volvantur perque deorum.  

(Rumour races through the startled city.  
The palace is in uproar with weeping and groans and women wailing,  
The heavens resonate with the loud mourning,  
Like nothing less than as if the whole of Carthage or ancient Tyre were collapsing under the enemies’ assault and raging fires were rolling over the dwellings of men and gods.)²⁵

Rome’s half-collapsed walls (‘semiruta urbis Romae moenia’) regain their glory through Demetrias’ actions. But, the rumour of Dido’s death presages the collapse of Carthage (‘immissis ruat hostibus omnis Karthago aut antiqua Tyros’). It is like fire overwhelming the city. Fire, as shown above, is also Jerome’s favourite metaphor for human passion.²⁶ The reader may conclude that love for the Christ is restorative of peace and joy in a war-torn context, while human passion is destructive not only of the individual, but of the nation.

Jerome then turns his virtuoso skills to popularist literature, as he launches into a *vita* of Demetrias.²⁷ The *vita* of the holy woman had its roots in the Greek romances. These portray, in Clark’s words:

Beautiful and aristocratic adolescent heroines who battle their kinfolk to be united with their true loves; they flee barbarians, wander, and are rescued from danger, while struggling to preserve their chastity against seemingly insuperable odds. At the end of many ordeals and adventures, the young couple is reunited, and marital bliss awaits.\textsuperscript{28}

The novel is transformed in the \textit{vita} and spiritualised. David Konstan highlights the importance of courage, initially on the part of the hero but later linked to the heroine. In the following account, Anthia, the heroine, argues with herself as she is about to enter a forced marriage with Perilaus, the governor of Cilicia:

\begin{quote}
Νυνὶ δὲ τί ποιήσεις, Άνθια; ἀδικήσεις Ἀβροκόμην τὸν ἄνδρα, τὸν ἐρωμένον, τὸν διὰ σὲ τεθνηκότα; Οὐχ οὔτως ἄνανδρος ἐγὼ οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς κακοῖς δειλή.
\end{quote}

(What are you going to do, Anthia? Are you going to do wrong by Habrocomes, your husband, your lover, who went through death for you? No, I am not so lacking in strength nor cowardly in adversity.)\textsuperscript{29}

She decides to take a deadly poison. Anthia’s courage lies in her determination to defend her chastity, maintaining her loyalty to Habrocomes. Konstan raises an important point. While not suggesting that Xenophon has written a Christian novel, he nevertheless sees in this account the adoption of new values as both the tenets of Judaism and Christianity spread throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{30}

This accords with Cameron’s statement that:

Christian discourse would have been different without the environment of the Roman world; and that environment itself was subject to geographical and diachronic variance. What we study is a dynamic process in which both sides are changing.\textsuperscript{31}

Jerome appropriated not only high classical literature to the ascetic cause, but also popularist. Jerome links Demetrias with Thecla whose thrilling story of enduring fire

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{29} Xenophon of Ephesus, \textit{Ephesai}a 3.6.3.
and wild beasts, had been enthusiastically embraced by Christian women.\textsuperscript{32} Parallels between the heroines of novella and the struggles of a bride of Christ are evident in the narration of Demetrias’ experiences. Jerome generates dramatic tension by describing Demetrias’ approaching marriage. Despite her betrothal to an illustrious bridegroom, she is in love with another (Christ). She secretly embraces ascetic practices: ‘appetisse eam ieuniorum laborem, asperitatem vestium, victus continentiam’ (‘she sought out the rigour of fasting, rough clothing and restraint in living’).\textsuperscript{33} But she confers with herself, not wishing to disappoint her mother and grandmother. Jerome alters the plot line of the novella in deference to potential patrons by portraying the latter two, not as harsh persecutors, but as loving observers longing for her to declare herself:

Non quod displiceret eis sanctum propositum, sed quod pro rei magnitudine, optare id et appetere non auderent.

(Not indeed that this holy profession displeased them, but because they did not dare to hope, nor seek after, an event of such magnitude.)\textsuperscript{34}

The dramatic tension increases as Demetrias’ wedding day draws near and she argues with herself, ‘Habet et servata pudicitia martyrium suum. Quid metuis aviam? Quid formidas parentem?’ (‘When chastity is to be preserved, it has its own kind of martyrdom. What do you fear from your grandmother? What do you dread in your parent?’)\textsuperscript{35} Jerome reinforces this notion of celibacy as martyrdom, by associating Demetrias’ \textit{vita} with that of St Agnes.\textsuperscript{36} Demetrias reminds herself of the steadfastness of St Agnes, a young woman who was raped and beheaded during the Diocletian persecution. Demetrias’ supposed brush with danger is highlighted:

Dudum inter barbaras tremuisti manus, aviae matrisque sinu et palliis tegebaris. Vidisti te captivam, et pudicitiam tuam, non tuae potestatis. Horruisti truces hostium vultus, raptas virgines Dei gemitu tacito conspexisti.

(Not so long ago, you trembled in the hands of the barbarian, and in the embrace of your mother and grandmother sheltered under their cloaks.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.4.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, \textit{Ep.} 130.5.
\textsuperscript{36} Jerome has already made the association between martyrdom and asceticism in his account of his dream to Eustochium. See 77; 133 above.
You saw yourself a captive and your chastity no longer under your control. You shuddered at the savage faces of the enemy and with a silent moan you saw the virgins of God ravished.)

Demetrias emerges from the experience intact. But having placed her in the company of a martyr, Jerome extracts as much drama as possible from the putative encounter and mother and grandmother emerge as courageous defenders of virtue. Threatened rape is a *topos* of the novella.

But, did Demetrias volunteer to be a dedicated virgin or was it the decision of the older women as a thanksgiving or a bid to live down the disgrace of certain rumours? It may have been a choice with which they were displeased. Was there some irony in Jerome’s claim that it would need the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes to describe their joy? Whatever the case, the narrative is a highly imaginative reconstruction, since the presentation of a strictly factual account is not Jerome’s purpose. He is performing the duty of a client in building up the reputation of his patron. So he goes on to suggest that Demetrias’ fame as ‘sponsa hominis’ (‘the wife of a man’) would have extended to just one province, but now she has universal acclaim. She has gained more than she has sacrificed. The dismissal of marriage is more muted than Jerome’s usual practice. This is in deference to the former status of Proba and Juliana, and so is an example of the women shaping Jerome’s text. It is uncertain that Demetrias ever faced personal threat from the barbarians, especially if, as rumoured, Proba bought them off. Jerome writes a similar set-piece in his threnody for Marcella, where she protects Principia from the Visigoths. By writing Demetrias into a *vita* / novella Jerome is demonstrating his ability as the consummate *litteratus* of the Roman *nobilitas*, who can turn his hand to any genre, even the popularist, and harness it for his ascetic discourse.

At this point, however, Jerome puts in a bid for financial help:

> Quod nuper in hac urbe dives quidam fecit presbyter ut duas filias in proposito virginali inopes relinquueret, et aliorum ad omnem copiam filiorum luxuriae atque deliciis provideret. Fecerunt hoc multae, pro

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37 Jerome, *Ep.* 130.5.
dolor, nostri propositi feminae; atque utinam rarum esset exemplum, quod quanto crebrius est, tanto istae feliciores, quae ne plurimarum quidem exempla sectatae sunt.

(Quite recently in this city, a certain rich presbyter caused his two daughters who were professed virgins to be left destitute, and the rest of his children he provided with an overabundance for self-indulgence and pleasure. I regret to say that many of our dedicated women have done the same thing. Would that such examples were rare, because the more frequent they are, so much more blessed are those who refuse to follow an example which is set them by so many.)\(^{43}\)

This sets the discourse in the context of a client/patron relationship, whatever its other purposes. Jerome clearly hopes, not too subtly, for remuneration. But, in his use of ‘nostri propositi’ he is appropriating to himself the right of instruction for all virgins. By demonstrating not only his spiritual authority and competence as an ascetic advisor, but also his consummate proficiency as a litteratus and rhetorician, he is implying that he is a worthy candidate for amicitia.

Jerome must also lay to rest a ghost from his past. The Aniciae would have been aware of the scandal of his departure from Rome thirty years earlier.\(^{44}\) In emphasising the furore that accompanied his letter to Eustochium, he turns the issue to his advantage, suggesting his moral integrity was the cause:

Ante annos circiter triginta de Virginitate servanda edidi librum, in quo necesse mihi fuit ire contra vitia, et propter instructionem virginis, quam monebam diaboli insidias patefacere. Qui sermo offendit plurimos, dum unusquisque in se intellegens quod dicebatur.

(About thirty years ago, I published a book, ‘On the Preservation of Virginity’, in which it was necessary for me to attack vice and in the interest of teaching the virgin, whom I was mentoring, to make plain the snares of the devil. This lecture offended very many, with each one believing that what was said was directed at him.)\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Jerome, Ep. 130.6.  
\(^{44}\) See 13ff. above.  
\(^{45}\) Jerome, Ep. 130.19. ‘If the cap fits, wear it’ is a common topos in Jerome. See Ep. 40.
A potential source of embarrassment becomes a triumph with his assertion that ‘liber manet, homines praeterierunt’ (‘the book remains, the men have passed away’). Cain comments:

Implicit in this bold statement about the permanence of his work is perhaps the hint to Demetrias that she could expect to be immortalized by his pen, just as Eustochium had been.

He suggests that Jerome has appropriated ‘the aphoristic-sounding phrase liber manet’ from Pliny the Younger where the latter:

relates an anecdote about an unnamed historian who gives a recitatio of his work one day. Certain members of the audience begged him to stop reading because they were ashamed at being reminded of the nefarious behaviour of which they themselves were guilty. The historian granted their request, but nevertheless they were not let off the hook. … “liber tamen ut factum ipsum manet manebit legeturque semper” (“for the book remains as the deed itself remains and will remain and will always be read”).

Jerome claims that, like Pliny’s historian (and, by inference, Pliny himself), he will transcend his own generation. But I suggest that, in addition to the reference to Pliny, Jerome is making an even greater claim for the lasting nature of his work, as the vocabulary and sentiment are redolent of Jesus’ words in Mt 24.35: ‘caelum et terra transibunt: verba mea non praeteribunt’ (‘heaven and earth will pass away, my words will not pass away’).

Some form of the verb ‘praeterire’ is also used in the other Gospel references. Jerome promises fame that outlasts even the revered pagans of the past. But this letter is more than Hieronymaic exculpation, for Jerome has never given up on his desire for the transformation of Rome.

46 Jerome, Ep. 130.19.
48 Ibid.
49 Mark 13.31; Lk 21.32–33.
**Powerful Patrons**

Having described Demetrias in the obligatory Scriptural tropes, Jerome focuses on her grandmother and mother, where the real power lay, in order to mend fences.

Clark comments on the role of female patrons in the fourth and fifth centuries:

> Although in late Roman society – unlike our own – money could not buy status, it might sometimes give a voice to those rich in funds but poor in status … One such group suffering status dissonance that benefited from these expanded opportunities for religious patronage was women.\(^{50}\)

This dissonance is centred on the denial of leadership and teaching roles for women in the Church. Patronage exercised by a wealthy female patron of the *nobilitas* with a client like Jerome, famous now as a scholar and mentor, was complex.\(^{51}\) The Anician women had both high rank and enormous wealth.\(^{52}\) Clark considers only wealth in her premise, whereas it is their rank, as well as their money, that makes their patronage so powerful. Janet Nelson’s comment must also be taken into consideration that ‘the forcefulness of nobility compensated for the weakness of gender’, especially in view of the suspicion toward women present in society.\(^{53}\) However, I hold that these Anician women acted in a similar way to the male patrons of literary figures under the Principate by offering financial support and a certain amount of protection for their client in an area that occupied their interest. Maecenas wrote poetry and supported Horace, but his energies were also engaged as an advisor to Augustus. Jerome’s women were interested in asceticism and biblical scholarship. However, the widows, in particular, continued to administer vast estates and wealth.\(^{54}\) Their lives were not spent waiting for a letter from Jerome to give meaning to their existence.

Clark regards female patronage as diminished by the fact that women were not allowed priestly roles. She, herself, is guilty of using the women of the text ‘to think with’, in

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\(^{52}\) Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, 50.


\(^{54}\) See reference to Marcella’s estate in Jerome, *Ep. 127.7*. 
focusing on the male writer’s self-aggrandisement or theological agenda to the exclusion of the importance of female patronage for outsiders like Jerome. Her women are locked into a role of passivity or victim, investing the male writer with extraordinary power, as we have identified previously. Yet, Clark is critical of essentialism in patristic writings. Her argument is based on the premise that power must be overt in order to be real. The power that the Anician women wielded was very real and exercised, as epigraphic and other texts below indicate, quite independently of advice from their spiritual advisors. Clearly, Jerome feared the power of the women to finance heretics, should they break with him. Moreover, women may not have wanted to become priests, as the priesthood was a small player in power-brokering in the early Church. Priests had none of the charismatic influence of the holy man, nor the growing status of a bishop.

Because of their pre-eminence in society and the Church, the Aniciae were used to exercising influence. A letter from John Chrysostom in 406 indicates their involvement in ecclesial politics. He requests support, from Juliana and Proba respectively, when Anicius Probus was consul. But as the nature of patronage is also *quid pro quo*, patrons accepted clients who would enhance the reputation of the *gens*. They were also concerned to protect the clan from any taint of heterodoxy, as the theological and social climate in Rome was changing.

The negotiation of status affects the structure of the letter. Jerome (and Pelagius, as he hovers in the background) is not of the *nobilitas*, but he asserts his status as spiritual mentor and scholar. Nevertheless, because of social distance, the letter lacks the intimacy of his own spiritual aspirations that is present in the letter to Eustochium.

Jerome readily acknowledges the political force of the women:

\[
\text{tanta est aviae eius et matris, } \textbf{insignium} \text{ feminarum, in iubendo} \\
\textbf{auctoritas}, \text{ in petendo fides, in extorquendo perseverantia.}
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55 Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” 1054. See 23 above.
57 See 162ff. below.
60 Peter Brown, “Aspects of Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy,” *JRS* 51, no. 1–2 (1961), 6
61 This is evident in their approaching both Pelagius and Jerome.
62 The imbalance in rank was not so obvious in the case of Ambrose of Milan or Paulinus of Nola.
(So great is the authority to command of her grandmother and mother, illustrious women, their faith in seeking out and their perseverance in laying hold.)

The highlighted terms were representative of male political status that is flattering to the women and also reflects Jerome’s reversal of the political prestige of the Roman male. In addition, they represent the women’s actual power, since there were no longer male relatives to lead the *gens*. Olybrius, Probas’s son, had died just before the sack of Rome. But Jerome also contests their position. He interpolates reference to his secretaries and the breadth of his writing including a *mise en scène* of himself as the busy scholar, musing on a complex passage from Ezekiel as he receives their request.

Skilfully, he asserts his giftedness, implying that learned and wealthy women might expect commentaries dedicated to them, thereby treating them as philosophers. It has been persuasively argued that Jerome’s commentaries resembled those of Origen in satisfying the ancient criteria of philosophy where a classical text was exegeted to provide the *askesis*, the philosophical underpinning for the virtuous life, followed by the disciplines by which the teaching may be put into practice.

Jerome further indicates his claim to eminence by reference to the frequency of requests to him for mentoring. Jacobs regards this as a haughty and somewhat clumsy claim to equal status. I suggest that this illustrates Jerome’s implicit claim throughout Letter 130 of an authority independent of birth and wealth, in order to ‘imbue a literary form that was ostensibly humble and subordinate, with tremendous authority’.

This negotiation of status and power tests the boundaries of the client-patron relationship. Brown’s prosopographical works on the supporters of Pelagius argue that Jerome’s causes were at odds with the upper echelons of the Roman aristocracy, of which the Anicii were the most prominent. Therefore, the seemingly conventional denial, noted above, of an ability to perform the task required of him with the rhetorical

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65 Jerome, *Ep.* 130.2. While Jerome frequently employs the image of the busy scholar at his books, he was, in fact, working on his *In Hiez*.
68 Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 728.
question, ‘Quid igitur faciam? Quod implere non possum, negare non audeo’ (‘What am I to do then? The request that I am unable to carry out, I do not dare to decline’) is laden with irony, for within the tight circles of the nobilitas, Jerome’s uneasy relationship with the gens Anicia would have been well known, and this letter read with malicious interest by his enemies. He had, therefore, to extricate himself not only from accusations of sycophancy and hypocrisy but to deal with a past antagonism.

This tension may account for the unevenness of tone throughout the letter and the extent to which Jerome’s past experiences and those of Proba’s shape it. Jerome’s fulsome praise is part of a strategy of appeasement, followed by self-assertion. After switching attention away from Demetrias to the more powerful, older women, he is more than a third of the way into the letter before he turns to precepts for ascetic living, the ostensible reason for the letter. He had first to move towards reconciliation, especially if Proba were, indeed, the noblissima mulierum Romanarum formerly pilloried by him.

Jerome embarks on a delicate process of recruiting the Aniciae to his plan for a renewed Empire. He lists the consulships of Demetrias’ very distinguished family tree, particularly draws attention to its links with the Probi and Olybrii clans:

> Scilicet nunc mihi Proborum et Olybriorum clara repetenda sunt nomina, et inlustre Anicii sanguinis genus, in quo aut nullus, aut rarus est, qui non meruerit consulatum. Aut … Olybrius, virginis nostrae pater … consul quidem … in pueritia.

(Note it behoves me to recall the famous names of the Probi and the Olybrii, and the illustrious bloodline of the Anicii, amongst whom there is either no one, or rarely one, who has not deserved the consulship. Or … Olybrius, the father of our virgin … a consul while still a boy.)

While he passes this off as a rhetorical convention – ‘rhetorum disciplina est’ (‘this is the training of the rhetoricians’) – it is absent from the letter to Eustochium. In fact, he manipulates the structures of rhetoric, rather than being constrained by them, in two

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71 Jerome, Ep. 130.19.
72 See Jerome, Ep. 22.32 and 63 above.
73 Jerome, Ep. 130.3.
74 Jerome, Epp. 130.3; 22.1–3.
significant omissions from the list.\textsuperscript{75} The first is the name of Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus, Proba’s husband:

Sentio me inimiciorum patere morsibus?\textsuperscript{76} Quod adulari videar noblissimae et clarissimae feminae; qui accusare non poterunt, si me scierint hucusque tacuisse.\textsuperscript{77} Neque enim laudavi in ea unquam antiquitatem generis, divitiarum et potentiae magnitudinem, viro vivente vel mortuo, quae alii forsitan mercennaria oratione laudaverint. Mihi propositum est stilo ecclesiastico laudare aviam virginis meae, et gratias agere, quod voluntatem eius, sua adiuverit voluntate.

(Do I see myself as open to the carping criticisms of my enemies? These men will not be able to accuse me, because I seem to be flattering a very noble and renowned lady, when they learn that hitherto I have been silent about her. I have never, whether her husband was alive or dead praised her for the antiquity of her lineage, the extent of her wealth and power, matters which others might perhaps have lauded in mercenary speeches. My purpose is to praise the grandmother of my virgin in a style befitting the church, and to render thanks because she has aided with her own wish, her [Demetrias’] desire.)\textsuperscript{78}

Jerome’s gloss on this omission is that his focus is on the grandmother, whom he claims never to have flattered hitherto, but now praises for her support of Demetrias, who will bring greater fame to the \textit{gens Anicia}. The implicit comparison is to Petronius Probus.\textsuperscript{79} Jerome, in his dealings with Proba, contests Pliny’s writing of distinguished women, where women were bound to promoting and reflecting their husband’s glory.\textsuperscript{80} The omission of the name of Petronius is deliberately insulting. He not only suppresses details of Petronius’ achievements, he extinguishes his \textit{fama} by omitting his name altogether. Dunphy suggests a reason for this insult:

If Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus represented the \textit{gens Anicia} in its grandeur, he was also, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, the

\textsuperscript{75} Dunphy, “Saint Jerome and the \textit{Gens Anicia},” 140.
\textsuperscript{76} See 139 above.
\textsuperscript{77} Proba could lay claim to that epithet but Jerome had used it perjoratively, 62 above.
\textsuperscript{78} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.7.
\textsuperscript{79} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.3. Note Jerome already claims status by appropriating Demetrias with \textit{virginis meae}.
\textsuperscript{80} See 64ff. above.
personification of their greed, and it is this aspect alone … that Jerome ever bothered to record for posterity.\(^81\)

This is borne out by Jerome’s entry in the chronicles for 372:

Probus praefectus Illyrici, inquissimus tributorum exactionibus ante provincias quas regebat, quam a barbaris vastarentur, erasit.

(Probus, as governor of Illyricum, destroyed those provinces which he ruled by his utterly ruthless extraction of taxes before they were laid waste by the barbarians.)\(^82\)

Jerome had never honoured Petronius during his lifetime and there were limits to his flattery. Yet Petronius was a Christian, part of a ‘movement towards a “respectable”, aristocratic Christianity’, a symbiosis between the old, traditional discourse and the new, Christian one.\(^83\) Rather than seeing this letter as toadyng to the gens Anicia, I regard it as a final challenge to those arrayed against him in Rome. Here is the great Anician family applying to Jerome. Let his critics take note. Jerome is prepared to extol the merits of the women and a selective history of the clan, only because they are acknowledging his superiority as an expert on the ascetic life, have finally produced a dedicated virgin and represent an opportunity to have the premier domus of the nobilitas reject the old Rome.

Those whom Jerome deemed enemies of Christ (and therefore, enemies of Jerome) fell into two categories. First were aggressively pagan Romans, such as Praetextatus, in whose consignment to hell Jerome rejoiced.\(^84\) Second were Christians on good terms with their pagan relations and amici, who continued to embrace the old Roman traditions, such as the Anicii. They had aligned with Rufinus in the Origenist controversy and had endorsed Pelagius.\(^85\)

In describing Demetrias’ antecedents, Jerome switches the reference point away from the more famous males to Demetrias’ father, Olybrius, whose undistinguished career is

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\(^{81}\) See Ammianus Marcellinus, *Re. gest.* 27.11.3; Dunphy, “Saint Jerome and the Gens Anicia,” 140.

\(^{82}\) Jerome, *Chronicon*, 372.


\(^{84}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 23.2.

described at length. His sole, real attainment seems to be that he attracted no scandal and held the consulship at a very young age:

Felix morte sua, qui non vidit patriam corruentem: immo felicior sobole, qui Demetriades proaviae nobilitatem insigniorem reddidit, Demetriades filiae perpetua castitate.

(Fortunate in his death, he did not see his native land fall: but happier still in his posterity, as he has restored the remarkable nobility of his great grandmother, Demetrias, through the perpetual chastity of his daughter, Demetrias.)

Olybrius’ fame lies in the fact that he is Proba’s son, Demetrias’ father and the grandson of another Demetrias. The women’s gloria, we see again, is no longer harnessed to the reputation of a male relation. The three Anician women, like Eustochium, are forerunners of a new order in Rome where glory will be restored to the nobility through the devoutness of women, previously considered less significant than their male relatives. The ‘first shall be last and the last first’ will begin with women. And who better to guide them on their path to glory than Jerome?

Not all the women of the clan, however, are worthy of recognition. The second significant omission from the family tree, Faltonia Betitia Proba, was the author of the immensely popular Cento Virgilianus de laudibus Christi, written in the mid-fourth century. Employing a skilful mixture of lines from the Bucolics, the Georgics and the Aeneid, the Cento retells the biblical narrative from Creation to Pentecost. Yet, Betitia is ignored, while Demetrias’ grandmother, an obscure female antecedent, is accorded honour for bearing the same name as the dedicated virgin. Courcelle has identified this Betitia, however, as the object of Jerome’s attack in his letter to Paulinus of Nola.

Sola scriptarum ars est, quam sibi omnes passim vindicent:

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86 Jerome, Ep. 130.3.
87 Mark 9.35.
89 See detailed study in Jane Stevenson, Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender and Authority, from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 64ff.
“scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.”

Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc soloeista verbo, hanc universari praesumunt, lacerant, docent, antequam discant.

(It is only the art of interpreting the Scriptures, that everyone, willy-nilly lays claim to for his- or herself.

“Learned and ignorant we all alike write poetry.”

This skill, the garrulous old woman, silly old man, longwinded illiterate, they all appropriate, tear apart and teach before they learn.)

Courcelle compares Jerome’s use of quotes taken from the Cento in the above letter, to attack those who, untrained in the interpretation of Scripture, seek the confirmation of a Christian Golden Age and a prophetic Virgil in the pagan classics.

Alii adducto supercilio grandia verba trutinantes inter mulierculas de sacris litteris philosophantur, alii discunt – pro pudor! – a feminis quod viros doceant … Taceo de meis similibus, qui si forte ad scripturas sanctas post saeculares litteras venerint … nec scire dignantur quid prophetae, quid apostoli senserint, sed ad sensum incongrua aptant testimonia …

Quasi non legerimus Homerocentonas et Vergiliocentonas, ac non sic etiam Maronem sine Christo possimus dicere Christianum, quia scripserat:

“iam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,
iam nova progenies caelo emittitur alto,”

et Patrem loquentem ad Filium:

“nate, meae vires, mea magna potentia solus,”

Et post verba Salvatoris in cruce:

“Talia perstabat memorans fixusque manebat.”

Puerilia sunt haec et circulatorum ludo similia, docere quod ignores.

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91 Hor. Ep. 2, 1.117.
92 Jerome, Ep. 53.7.
94 Virgil, Georgics. 4.6–7.
95 Virgil, Aen. 1.664.
96 Virgil, Aen. 2.650.
(Some with wrinkled brows and weighing up their lofty words philosophise concerning the sacred writings among the ladies. Others – how shameful! – learn from women what they teach men; I remain silent about persons who, if by chance, like myself have come to the study of the holy scriptures after secular literature. [Such people] do not deign to notice what Prophets and apostles have intended but they adapt unsuitable texts to suit their own meaning. …

As if we have not read the centos of Homer and Virgil; and yet we could not say that the Christless Maro was a Christian without Christ just because he had written:

“Now the virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns,
Now a newborn child is sent down from the soaring heaven.”

Another line might be addressed by the Father to the Son:

“Hail only Son, my might and great power.”

And following the Saviour’s words on the cross,

“Calling to minds such things, he held fast, and remained transfixed.”

These comments are puerile, like the tricks of a charlatan, teaching what you don’t understand.)

Brown describes these comments as ‘bringing out the waspish in Jerome’. But Jerome’s comment above and his failure to mention Betitia in the genealogy point to a much deeper enmity than the merely ‘waspish’. Jerome made a practice of ignoring the names of his enemies in his works. He refers to Melania, for instance, only in insulting allusions: ‘Evagrius Ponticus Hiborita … scribit ad eam cuius nomen nigredinis testatur perfidia tenebras’ (‘Evagrius of Ibera in Pontus … writes to her whose name, black, bears witness to the darkness of her wickedness’). Kelly sums up Jerome’s treatment of those of whom he did not approve: ‘As Jerome was in the habit of doing with his bêtes noires, he simply consigned him to oblivion.’ But, of course, everybody knew who they were and therein lay the insult.

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97 Jerome, Ep. 53.7.
100 See Jerome, Ep. 133.3 where Jerome cites various heretical writings, particularly those of Rufinus.
101 Kelly, Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies, 257.
102 The obliteration of a name from all records was a form of civic punishment throughout the Republic and the Principate. See Flower’s authoritative work, indicating the usage of ‘memory sanctions’ in
Jerome regarded Petronius’ aristocratic pride in civic achievements and acquisition of wealth as vitiating any Christian profession. Betitia stands for the harmonisation of Christianity with the classical, literary traditions of the past. Jerome’s rejection of Betitia as a model for aristocratic women, is not because she is a woman, but because of her theology. She predicts a new golden age for Rome. Jerome’s hope for Rome, however, is essentially eschatological: he seeks to transform the city in preparation for Christ’s return. Moreover, given Jerome’s exacting study of Scripture, her Cento is blasphemous, for she replaces Jesus’ words from the Cross – ‘Pater, dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt’ (‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’) – with a pastiche from the Aeneid and the Bucolics. Courcelle sympathises with Jerome:

Voici que le Crucifié, au lieu de pardonner, menace ses bourreaux de vengeance (Aeneid, 1.136) et remploie même les propos de Silène ivre Bucolics VI: 23! L’audace de Proba est proprement scandaleuse et l’indignation de Jérôme pleinement justifiée.

Further, she has written Jesus in terms of a Roman hero, whereas Jerome’s heroes are now celibate young women, the new martyrs. But also contrary to Jerome’s vision on wealth distribution, she reinforces the idea of the rich hanging on to their money so that:

in one revealing word choice, Faltonia depicts Christ as telling the rich young man that perfection consists not in selling all he has and giving to the poor [compare Mt 19.21] but merely in learning inner-aversion (line 522: contemnere) for his supposedly retainable riches.

Petronius and Betitia Proba are subjected to ‘memory sanctions’ by Jerome because their loyalty lies with the ‘old’ Rome at the cost of their Christianity. Jerome offers


104 See Jerome, Ep. 22.40 for Eustochium’s triumphant entry to heaven.


Demetrias and her female relations a reinterpretation of their status as a member of the Anicii that will surpass previous glories. At the same time, he will implicitly offer his services to the older women to enable them to salvage something of the Anician reputation in view of recent events, while at the same time interpolating his own vision for Rome and her dominions.

**A new narrative for the gens Anicia**

Betitia Proba has misused Virgil, in Jerome’s opinion, by glorifying the hopes of the old Rome at the expense of the Christian way. Jerome, I suggest, is demonstrating here the legitimate way in which the classics may be used in a Christian discourse. So, having removed the male members of the *gens Anicia* as the reference point for Proba’s *gloria*, Jerome now rewrites her in Virgilian tropes as a new Aeneas coming to the shores of Africa after the burning of Troy:

\[
\text{Quae de medio mari fumantem viderat patriam, et fragili cumbae salutem suam suorumque commiserat, crudeliora invenit Africae litora.}
\]

(She had seen the smoke of her native land from the midst of the sea, and had committed her own safety and the safety of her dependants to a frail craft and found the shores of Africa even more brutal.)

He picks up here the Virgilian motif applied earlier to Demetrias. This continues the narrative of his hope for the new Rome, where women fill the heroic roles of the pagan epics. Women are being allowed to play a part in a traditionally male discourse, thereby allowing new ways for them to think about themselves and their roles. This is a radical revision of gender assignment by Jerome. But Brown’s estimate that ascetic women were valued for ‘harboring a deposit of values that were prized by their male

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109 See 128ff. above

110 Eustochium is presented as an Aeneas-like figure at 117 ff. above. Mohr links Aeneas with characters from Scripture but Jerome the lives of women with both Aeneas and Scriptural characters.

111 Creusa did not accompany Aeneas.
spokesman as peculiarly precious to the Christian community’, is also reflected here. Jerome praises her for selling her property for the benefit of the poor:

\[\text{ut erubescat omnis ecclesiastici ministerii gradus, et cassa nomina monachorum emere praedia, tanta nobilitate vendente.}\]

(so that every level of ministry in the Church blushes with shame together with those who are monks, in name only, at buying up houses at a discount when one of such great nobility is selling them.)

Having established Proba as a model for the founding of a ‘new’ Rome through this exemplary behaviour, Jerome embarks on an account of the tragedies and perils she has faced. In view of the hostility and accusations of treachery that accompanied her departure, it is possible that Proba did, of necessity, sell off her property cheaply, but Jerome puts a favourable interpretation on it. He expatiates, in an appropriate way from Scripture and Horace, on the death of her son and the troubles of the earthly life, while taking the opportunity to highlight the avarice of some monks, in implicit contrast to his own stated poverty.

On arrival in Africa, Proba encounters a brutal man, as Dido encountered Iarbas. Heraclian, the Count of Africa even sells widows and dedicated virgins into slavery. The description of Heraclian is replete with classical allusions: he is the Orcus in Tartaro, and ‘Hic matrum gremis abducere pactas’ (‘he tore betrothed girls from the embrace of their mothers’).

Clark has cast doubt on the value of a socio-cultural context for discovering real women, since it may be mere window dressing to create ‘an illusory reality in the minds of the reader’. Feisty Christian women, standing up to governors, are a motif in late antique Christian writing. However, in this account of Proba, quoted below, Jerome intimates that some form of questionable financial transaction had taken place between Proba and Heraclian, and Jerome is letting her know he has heard the rumours. But Jerome, the potential client, takes over and he turns

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115 Horace, *Carmen* 3.3.7–8. *Rom* 12.12; 5.3–5; 8.35–6 *inter alia*. Jerome reminds the reader of his pastoral skills.
117 See 25–6 above.
this scandal into a virtue, representing Proba as paying the governor off to protect the women in her charge from enslavement:

Et mirantur aemuli (virtus enim semper invidiae patet) cur tantarum secum pudicitiam tacita proscriptione mercata sit, cum et ille partem sit dignatus accipere, qui to tum potuit au ferre; et haec quasi comiti negare non ausa sit, quae se intellegebat sub nomine privatae dignitatis tyranno servientem?

(And the jealous may wonder (for virtue always suffers through envy) why Proba bought the chastity of so many women in company with her by means of a secret transaction, since that fellow deigned to accept a part, when he could have seized the lot. Just the same way as she did not dare to reject the count’s proposition when she realised that she was a virtual captive to a tyrant, in spite of her rank.)

Jerome has been ‘writing’ the Aniciae into his picture of the ideal women for the ideal Rome. Here, however, is an intimation of a ‘real’ forceful woman at the heart of the narrative. Her methods are open to question and sufficiently talked about for Jerome to feel the need to deal with them – a woman who is resourceful enough to negotiate her way out of Rome and to deal with corrupt officials in a new province. Moreover, although she may have sold off her property, she is not without resources to make her way in a new environment and provide a first-class mentor for her granddaughter and skilled client to salvage the Anician reputation. This, in part, answers the question as to why the Anician women approached Jerome, in spite of the antipathy that he has displayed and which he occasionally reveals in this letter. But an even greater threat to Anician reputation was looming from an unexpected quarter in the Pelagian controversy.

The Aniciae and Doctrinal Controversy

The Pelagian controversy has been the catalyst for the women approaching Jerome. The importance of the theological dispute and the rivalry between Jerome and Pelagius as ascetic mentors provide the context for demonstrating how Jerome expects the

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119 Jerome, Ep. 130.7.
women to engage with theology, and the women’s independent decision-making. Once again their role as patrons affects the text and their actions.

The enmity between Jerome and Pelagius had a long history. This supports Evans’ view that Jerome, rather than Augustine, was the first to publicly oppose Pelagius. Georges de Plinval identifies traces of Pelagius’ letter in Jerome’s response, suggesting that he had been given a copy of the letter: compare Pelagius, Ep. ad Demetriam 1.1: ‘novum … et … praecipuum … quoddam flagitat’ (‘she demands something new and special’), with Jerome, Epistula 130.1: ‘neque … novum et praecipuum quiddam … flagitant’ (‘what they demand is neither new nor unusual’).

Jerome never names Pelagius but exhorts Demetrias:

“Superbis Deus resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.” Ubi autem gratia, non operum retributio, sed donantis est largitas; ut inpleatur dictum Apostoli: “Non est volentis, neque currentis, sed miserentis Dei.” Et tamen velle, et nolle nostrum est; ipsumque quod nostrum est, sine Dei miseratione non nostrum est.

(“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Where grace is present, there is no recompense for works but only the generosity of the giver; so as to accomplish the word of the Apostle: “It is not a matter of the will nor of running, but the mercy of God.” And yet to will or not to will which is ours to do, without the mercy of God, are not ours at all.)

122 For differing opinions on the dispute, see Robert F. Evans, Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968).
124 Jer 4.6.
125 Rom 9.16.
126 James 4.6; 1 Pet 5.5.
127 Jerome, Ep. 130.12.
Jerome is attacking Pelagius’ opposition to the doctrine of original sin, and prevenient grace. Brown refers to the writing of Pelagius and his disciples as:

Behind the counsels of perfection of Pelagius, we can sense the high demands of noblesse oblige and the iron discipline of the patrician household. The ideal Christian of Pelagian literature was a prudens, carefully reared in conformity to the divine law, to be different from “the ignorant crowd”.

This is not unlike Jerome’s vision for a new Rome, and his sancta superbia. However, for Jerome, glory lies in self-abasement. While philosophers engaged in practices paralleled by the ascetics, such as disciplining the body, reflection and meditation and the general outworking of their philosophy in life, Jerome is claiming that these ascetic practices could not be carried out without God’s intervention. This differs from Foucault’s understanding of souci de soi on the part of ancient philosophers, though I accept that the techniques of asceticism reflected philosophical practices, especially in the use of medical terms for self-analysis. Jerome employs the verse, ‘Superbis Deus resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam’ (‘God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble’) twice in the letter. The proximity of the quotes within the narrative is instructive. In the first instance, Jerome uses the verse to exhort Demetrias to be obedient to her grandmother and mother. This is typical of his advice as an ascetic mentor. He is also ‘writing’ Demetrias to make a theological point. The older women would agree with the command to obedience, but Jerome employs the verse to challenge Pelagius’ focus on the efficacy of the human will, unaided, to please God. If the women agree with the text in regard to Demetrias’ obedience, they will be compelled to accept the doctrine of grace also.

Jacobs suggests that Demetrias is ‘written’ by Jerome, Augustine and Pelagius as ‘an emblem of ascetic theory and praxis, demonstrating how doctrinal orthodoxy and ascetic orthopraxy are meant to “fit”’. This locates women’s religious power in their

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128 Jerome’s antagonism is understandable, since, Pelagius sought a via media between the positions taken by Jerome and Jovinian on the issue of marriage in Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy, 267.
131 Jerome, Ep. 30.12 and 13 respectively. Humility before God is a Scriptural motif: Ex 10.3; James 4.10.
132 Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 735.
adherence to ascetic *praxis*, hence the paraenetic nature of the letters to Demetrias, rather than in their participation in the theology or ‘theory’ of it. In response to Jacobs, I suggest that Demetrias does not simply ‘perform’ Jerome’s precepts. He invites her, together with Juliana and Proba, to enter into an understanding of the theological controversy and the need for a rigorous understanding of Scripture to counter heterodoxy. In recognition of their classical learning, Jerome illustrates his precepts from the classics and philosophical practice. Moderation in fasting is substantiated by a text from Terence: ‘Μηδὲν ἄγαν’ (‘In nothing too much’). The precepts in this letter are less extreme than in the letter to Eustochium and fasting is regarded as a discipline rather than a cure for lust. This again intimates the women’s agency, where Jerome is reluctant to suggest that a scion of that family may have a problem with lust.

Earlier, Jerome used Catullus in his description of the Etruscan wedding customs that Demetrias must forgo, had she married in Africa. In both instances, he is demonstrating how the classics may be divested of their pagan origins, and employed as Christian *exempla*.

Assiduous reading of the Scriptures precedes all the tenets of ascetic practice. The importance of this advice is reinforced in his conclusion: ‘Ama Scripturas sanctas’ (‘Love the Holy Scriptures’). The following convoluted metaphors follow an exhaustive biblical theology of celibacy:

> Haec cursim quasi de prato pulcherrimo sanctarum scripturarum, parvos flores carpisse sufficiat pro commonitione tui, ut claudas cubiculum pectoris, et crebro signaculo munias frontem tuam, ne exterminator Aegypti in te locum repperiat.

(It is enough to have picked these few flowers, as it were, in passing from those fairest fields of the holy scriptures as a warning to you, that you shut the door of your breast and guard your forehead regularly with

133 Ibid.
135 Jerome, *Ep.* 130.5; see Catullus, *Carmen* 61.
136 See 129–30 above where Dido’s experience is employed.
the sign [of the cross], so that the Destroyer of Egypt does not find a place in you.)

What Jerome requires of his followers is a total commitment of the heart and the mind signified by the places touched in making the sign of the cross. His writings are full of warnings against false virgins who can counterfeit *praxis*. The importance of the mind is signified by Jerome’s robust theological underpinning of the how and why of *praxis*. When Jerome sets himself up as Moses and Paul, Jacobs interprets this to mean that the ‘letter reiterates on which side of their correspondence ultimate authority resides’. But this is precisely why the Anician women have contacted him, namely, because of his reputation as an ascetic mentor and authority on Scripture. Commitment to serious study of the Scriptures sets Jerome’s women apart and the reason he returns to the subject repeatedly amid the other ‘perfunctory’ advice. Jacobs observes that:

Many of Jerome’s specific remarks on the ascetic life echo those of Pelagius: the recollection of biblical examples, the importance of abstinence and fasting as well as moderation in these behaviours, warning about anger, the significance of regular prayer … a virgin “trained” by Jerome would not look so different from a virgin “trained” by Pelagius.

A virgin under Jerome’s direction may ‘not look so different’ but her mind would be engaged to a greater extent. Jerome’s own life was based on the study of the Scriptures and he offers to share this knowledge. Thus, he mocks Pelagius’ lack of a classical education, implying this is a handicap in interpreting the Scriptures correctly. Jerome’s plethora of classical allusions intimates that he understands the mind of the *nobilitas*. Therefore, Jerome is laying claim to equal status with the women, as well as competence as a mentor. But, I suggest, he is also showing that Pelagius and Betitia lack an understanding of how the classics must be reinterpreted in the new dispensation.

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139 Jerome, *Ep.* 2.5.  
140 Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 730.  
141 Jerome, *Ep.* 130.9, 10, 15.  
144 See the importance of a classical education as a social distinctive, 31–2 above.
Pelagius gives conventional advice to read the Scriptures in moderation. Jerome advocates a deep understanding of the Scriptures as an antidote to heresy. This accounts for the somewhat jarring reference to the ‘destroyer’ amid the gentle reference to ‘flowers’ from the Scriptures. As Jerome’s letter concludes, he refers to the Origenist controversy, and the trope of Egypt, employed above, finds its *locus* in the source of that heresy.

Haec inpia et scelerata doctrina olim in Aegypto et Orientis partibus versebatur, et nunc abscondite, quasi in foveis viperarum apud plerosque versatur, illarumque partium pollutum puritatem, et quasi hereditario malo serpit in paucis, ut perveniat ad plurimos; quam certus sum, quod si auderis non recipias. Habes enim apud Deum magistras, quarum fides norma doctrinae est. Intellegis quid loquar. Dabit enim tibi Deus in omnibus intellectum. Nee statim adversum saevissimam heresim, et multo his nequiora quam dixi, responsionem flagitabis … cum praesentis operis si instruere virginem, non hereticis respondere.

(This impious and wicked doctrine was located some time ago in Egypt and eastern parts, but now concealed as if in viper pits, it is found in many places, and pollutes the purity of those places, and it creeps like a hereditary disease in short time, so that it may reach even more – which, I am sure, if you should hear of it, you would not accept it. Indeed, you have instructresses who belong to God, whose faith is the standard doctrine. You understand what I have said – “for God *will give* [sic] you understanding in all things” – nor right away should you press for a refutation against the cruellest heresy, and those even more vile … The present work is to instruct a virgin, not refute heretics.)

By the flood of Scriptural references and his linking the Origenist heresy with Pelagius and Arius, Jerome invites Demetrias to discern the nature of heresy by offering to send her an account of his writings on false teaching, which ‘in alio opere Deo adiuvante,

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147 Ps 83.7
148 Jerome, *Ep.* 130.16; Jacobs’ translation has been used here as the point of reference in Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 740.
subvertimus; quod si volueris, prompte libenterque mittemus’ (‘in another work, we
have overturned, God being our helper, which if you wish, we will send promptly to
you’).

Clearly Jerome, the student of the Scriptures, was not simply concerned with praxis
without theological engagement. Askesis followed by praxis was the way Paul, Jerome’s
New Testament hero, constructed his letters. It was also present in the hermeneutics
of the Jewish Scriptures, where the revelation of the nature of YHWH and his covenant
with Israel evinces a certain way of behaving. Pierre Hadot presents a portrait of
ancient philosophy which also comprises a set of spiritual practices, exercised both
inwardly and outwardly, that deepen and carry out the intellectual basis. I have
referred above to Jerome’s acceptance of Origen’s methodology, where Origen
produced ‘philosophical commentaries which presented the content of the Bible as
philosophy’, comprising ethics, physics and theology. So Jerome’s most cherished
models placed a firm emphasis on askesis leading to praxis. Jerome’s expectation is that
the senior women will read and guide Demetrias once they have understood what is at
stake. Jerome is passing on to these women what he had conceived of in de viris
illustribus, namely, that the moral and intellectual quality of Christian writers was such
that they need not stand in awe of the pagans of the past.

Jacobs regards Demetrias as diminished by Jerome in his exhortation that safety lies in
her obedience to her mother and grandmother, her models for piety. Jacobs claims that
Jerome goes further than Pelagius, ‘to reinscribe Demetrias in a relationship of
inferiority both to her ascetic master and to her family guardians’. But personal
autonomy is an anachronistic option. She would be subject either to a husband or her
guards. Only as a dedicated virgin could she look forward to some personal

149 Jerome, Ep. 130.16. Jerome, Ep. 124, is one such treatise on Origen’s ‘First Principles’. Jerome’s
polemic follows a standard pattern of heresiology that locates Pelagius in the heretics’camp: see an
excellent account in Benoit Jeanjean, Saint Jérôme et l’hérésie (Paris: Études Augustiniennes,
1999), 388–430.
150 See Rom 1–11 for askesis, 12–16; for praxis, linked by: ‘Therefore … be transformed by the renewing
of your mind’ (12.1–2). Similarly see Gal 3–4 for askesis; then 5–6 for praxis.
151 See Pss 19.7–11; 119.33–6; Ex 21.1–10.
152 See P. Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault, trans.
154 Jerome, Ep. 130.7.
155 Christian Borgeais, “La personnalité de Jérôme dans son De Viris illustribus,” in Jérôme entre
l’Occident et l’Orient: XVe centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son instilation à
Augustiniennes, 1988), 292.
156 Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 730.
autonomy. Jerome somewhat tactlessly points out that she will have control of her finances when the older women die. Then, he suggests, she will spend her money on projects dear to his heart such as caring for the poor, especially the voluntarily poor in the person of monks and nuns. Once again, Jerome is making a bid for financial support, yet, the admonition, in its context, is uncharacteristically restrained. Jerome is realistic about aristocratic aspirations with regard to raising monuments and shapes his writing accordingly. He knows the women’s power and from what he knows of their reputation, they are unlikely to surrender their wealth as extravagantly as Paula had on the poor. Nevertheless, he subtly employs echoes of Virgil:

Alii aedificent ecclesias, vestiant parietes marmorum crustis; columnarum moles advehant, earumque deaurent capita pretiosum ornatum non sentientia … Non reprehendo, non abnuo … Meliusque est hoc facere, quam repositis opibus incubare. Sed tibi aliud propositum est: Christum vestire in pauperibus, visitare in languentibus, pascere in esurientibus, suscipere in his qui tecto indigent, et maxime in domesticis fidei, virginum alere monasteria, servorum Dei, et pauperum spiritu habere curam, qui diebus et noctibus serviunt Domino tuo.

(Let others build churches, and clothe the walls with sheets of marble, let others procure massive columns, gilding the insentient capitals with costly ornaments … I do not condemn nor do I do reject it. And it is better to act thus than to brood over amassed wealth. However, your responsibility is of a different kind namely: to clothe Christ in the person of the poor, to visit Him in the sick, to feed Him in the hungry, to shelter Him in the homeless, and especially those of the household of faith, to support communities of virgins, to take care of God’s servants, the poor in spirit, who serve your Lord day and night.)

Jerome is employing a priamel, a literary device to highlight a Gospel precept that emphasises generosity to the poor. It is a mark of Jerome’s great skill as a writer in juggling his role as potential client, spiritual advisor and social architect. He unites all these aspects by again employing the Aeneid to substantiate a principle and to continue

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157 See Jerome, Ep. 53, in which he urges Paulinus of Nola to divest himself of his considerable wealth.
158 See Virgil, Geor. 2.50.
159 Mt 19.21; Lk 18.22; John, 12.26.
incorporating the Aniciae into his vision for Rome.\textsuperscript{162} The shade of Anchises acknowledged the skill of the Greeks, using a priamel structure that Jerome imitates above.

\begin{quote}
excudent alii spirantia mollius aera  
(credo equidem), vivos ducent de marmore vultus,  
orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus  
descrivent radio et surgentia sidera dicent.
\end{quote}

(Others will hammer out the living bronze (I do believe) more delicately; they will draw life-like faces from marble. They will plead their causes better, trace with instruments the movement of the heavens, and predict the rising of the constellations.)\textsuperscript{163}

Rome’s greater gift is to rule. Demetrias’ gift is to give generously to the voluntary poor.

In the same way that Anchises set forth a vision for Rome as ruler of the world, Jerome proffers a vision for the redistribution of wealth in the new ascetic world. To achieve this he employs Virgil in the service of asceticism.\textsuperscript{164}

However, while fasting and prayer and other precepts are enjoined upon Demetrias, the actual tenor of her life as a dedicated virgin would not alter a great deal since:

Ascetic families in Rome lived in their own palaces or on estates near the city in the manner associated as much with the traditional deportment of an aristocrat \textit{in otio}, as with new monastic organisation.\textsuperscript{165}

This is reflected in Jerome’s advice that, in addition to giving herself to reading, she engage in wool-working, the occupation of a respectable Roman woman.\textsuperscript{166} Jerome is showing continuity with the past:

\textsuperscript{162} See 128ff.; 147–9 above.  
\textsuperscript{163} Virgil, \textit{Aen.} 6.847–53.  
\textsuperscript{164} For Jerome’s defence of the use of pagan literature, see Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 21.70.  
statue quot horis sanctam scripturam ediscere debeas; quanto tempore legere, non ad laborem, sed ad delectationem et instructionem animae … habe to lanam semper in manibus.

(Decide how long you ought to spend studying holy Scripture; you ought to read for however long that it delights and instructs the mind and does not become a labour … always have some wool at hand.)\textsuperscript{167}

The prefacing of the instruction with Scripture reading, again stresses Jerome’s view that this was the most valuable ascetic work. We have seen that Pliny regarded the role of the husband as essential to the development of the education of his young wife.\textsuperscript{168} Jerome is filling that educational vacuum on behalf of Christ.

He still regarded Roman cultural norms as the benchmark, even when challenging them. Therefore, Demetrias’ rank is important to Jerome because it ennobles the calling of all virgins but brings special lustre to the aristocratic families, as he says of Demetrias: ‘nobilem familiam, virgo virginitate sua nobiliorem faceret’ (‘a girl by [dedicating] her virginity would render a noble house, nobler still’).\textsuperscript{169} Jerome never writes about the daughters of middle-rank families. He deplores the actions of families who offer disabled, dowry-less and plain daughters to the Church. There is no merit, if there is no sacrifice and so no witness to Rome of the heroic devotion of these women in what they surrender. Heroism constitutes part of the glory that Jerome offers.\textsuperscript{170} This is the same heroism that characterised the martyrs. Both Jacobs and Brown cite with approval Pelagius’ affirmation of Demetrias’ lineage that would contribute to her spiritual growth, if she strove to fulfil the Law of Christ.\textsuperscript{171} But renunciation of status and riches was precisely what the ascetic life was about, both for men and women. In another letter, Jerome exhorts Nepotian:

“This is the same heroism that characterised the martyrs. Both Jacobs and Brown cite with approval Pelagius’ affirmation of Demetrias’ lineage that would contribute to her spiritual growth, if she strove to fulfil the Law of Christ. But renunciation of status and riches was precisely what the ascetic life was about, both for men and women. In another letter, Jerome exhorts Nepotian:

\begin{quote}
“Filius hominis non habet, ubi caput reclinet”\textsuperscript{172} et tu amelas porticus et ingentia tectorum spatia metaris? Hereditatem expectas saeculi, coheres Christi?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{167} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.15.
\textsuperscript{168} See 64 above.
\textsuperscript{169} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.6.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} See Pelagius, \textit{Ad Demetr.} 22.2, 38; Brown, \textit{Through the Eye of a Needle}, 306.
\textsuperscript{172} Mt 8.20.
(“The son of man has nowhere to lay his head”: and are you in the process of measuring out extensive colonnades and spacious halls? Are you waiting for an inheritance in this age, you who are a joint heir with Christ?)\(^{173}\)

Jerome is not seeking to transform a Roman aristocrat into a nonentity but into an ascetic aristocrat, who models heaven to all ranks, because she lives ‘as the angels’ in her celibacy. She will now also have fame beyond that of an heiress, and not dependent on her family arranging a brilliant marriage for her. She will have the benefit of Jerome’s skill as a rhetorician to broadcast her reputation to the world.

Demetrias, however, is no puppet to be manipulated for Jerome’s grand design for Rome, nor his self-promotion as a scholar, nor even his assertion of ultra-orthodoxy. The social logic of Demetrias’ position shapes the text. She is from a theologically sophisticated family, with a history of women steeped in the literature of classical Rome. Like her mother and grandmother, she would expect to become a patron of Christian scholars. Her orthodoxy is important to the good order of the Church. Rees made the comment above that, ‘rhetoric apart’, Jerome’s work was mediocre. But the rhetoric is part of the social logic, since it can shape the text. Jerome must employ all his rhetorical skill to demonstrate that he is worthy of their patronage, that the enmity of the past was only directed against those of the clan who did not live up to his exacting standards, and that they should assent to his new discourse for Rome.

**Jerome’s Personae**

Jerome has again presented himself as the ascetic expert and scholar of Scripture. This representation differs from his other letters to women in that he no longer advocates his *veritas Hebraica*, having established himself as an expositor and exegete through his commentaries. In this letter, he focuses on the portrayal of himself as a *litteratus*. Clark points out that this letter contains more classical allusions than any of his other letters to women.\(^{174}\) This pays tribute to the women’s education. It also emphasises Jerome’s place among the elite and his right to lead them as a Moses and a Paul, both of whom are the traditionally great writers of the old and new dispensation. In the Scriptures, both Moses and Paul are God’s chosen in the formation of a new people.\(^{175}\) Jerome, too,


\(^{174}\) Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends*, 74.

\(^{175}\) For Moses, see Ex 19.4–6; for Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, see Gal 2.7–8.
is seeking to create a new ‘angelic’ people who live as virgins. Jerome had focused on
widows for almost thirty years, but in Demetrias he sees the opportunity to resurrect his
vision through a young virgin. Since the Visigoth attack on Rome, the vision now
encompasses the provinces.\(^{176}\) Already his attention had begun to turn to Gaul and he
had set himself up to challenge the spiritual authority of the bishops.\(^ {177}\) He asserts his
authority as superior to that of any other claimant to guide Demetrias and, therefore,
wholly appropriate to the exalted status of the Aniciae.

Cain, however, sees Jerome’s ‘typologyzing of himself as Moses and the bald assertion
of the supremacy of his own writings’ as either ‘mere showmanship’ or to be considered
in light of the polemical argument with Pelagius.\(^ {178}\) Neither of these explanations, I
submit, quite does justice to Jerome’s frequent employment of the type.\(^ {179}\) He even
applies it to others, such as Nepotian.\(^ {180}\) Jerome as Moses is the prophetic guide to the
ascetic life, rather than a mere advocate for it. Like Moses, he has gone before into the
wilderness, struggled and prevailed. Jerome’s self-representation as Moses in the letter
to Eustochium was both a claim to pre-eminence but more particularly a call to the
heroic struggle that lay ahead, and a warning of the dangers of the ‘wilderness’ to be
traversed.

As Moses, Jerome was appealing to a \textit{niche} market in the world of ascetic mentoring.
He makes his services available only to those sufficiently dedicated (or elite) to reach
the Promised Land/ Heaven:

\begin{quote}
Sed hoc ad eas pertineat, quae necdum elegerunt virginitatem, et
exhortatione indigent, ut sciant quale sit quod eligere debeat. Nobis
electa servanda sunt et quasi inter scorpiones et colubros incendendum ut
accinctis lumbis calciosque pedibus et adprehensis manu baculis iter
per insidias hucus saeculi et inter venena faciamus possimusque ad
dulces Iordanis pervenire aquas et terram repromissionis intrare.
\end{quote}

(But this treatise involves those who have not yet chosen virginity, and
are in need of exhortation, so that they may know what it is that they

\(^{176}\) See Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 130.6.
\(^{177}\) See 234ff. below.
\(^{178}\) Cain, \textit{The Letters of Jerome}, 162.
\(^{179}\) See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 77, 78, where Jerome is Moses bringing the Israelites safely to ‘Canaan’ through the
Scriptures.
\(^{180}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 60.17.
should chose. For my part it is a matter of how what has been chosen must be preserved, and we must advance among the scorpions and serpents, so that with our loins girded and with our feet shod, staff in hand we make our way through the ambushes and venom of this generation and be able to arrive at the sweet waters of the Jordan and to enter into the Promised Land.)

He has portrayed himself as the successor to the Apostle Paul, whom he claimed as the great advocate of virginity. Like Paul writing to the Colossians, he also is writing to someone unknown to him. Taking on the apostolic mantle, he appropriates to himself the right to instruct Demetrias, as Paul instructed the unknown Colossians. But he boldly writes Demetrias’ mother and grandmother into the biblical discourse, as an Apollos to his Paul:

\[
\text{Igitur et in opere praesenti avia quidem materque plantaverint, sed et nos rigabimus et dominus incrementum dabit.}
\]

(Therefore in this present labour, indeed the mother and grandmother have planted, we shall water and God will provide the increase.)

The women had exhibited shrewdness in reaching North Africa safely, so it is doubtful that this is an extravagant piece of flattery aimed at gullible patrons. As well as laying claim to an apostle-like authority in his asceticism, he is acknowledging the part the women have played in raising Demetrias. An apostolic-like authority slides into a quasi-episcopal authority, as I will demonstrate below.

Both the letter to Eustochium and that to Demetrias share a sense of threat and loss but also the promise of a joyous consummation, under the tutelage of one whose teaching derives from Moses and Paul. Jerome is making his position, as the champion of orthodoxy, unassailable. His experience of the Origenist heresy hunt and conflict with Rufinus scarred him for the rest of his life. Rufinus had died in Sicily but Jerome still took every opportunity to highlight his orthodox credentials. Pelagius was his last

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181 Jerome, Ep. 130.19.
182 Jerome, Ep. 22.37. See 183 below.
183 Jerome, Ep. 130.2.
184 Ibid., after 1 Cor 3.6: ‘ego plantavi Apollo rigavit sed Deus incrementum dedit.’
185 See 207ff. below.
challenge. The women might infer from Jerome’s claims that safety in a troubled ecclesial environment lay with him.

As in his letter to Eustochium, Jerome does not eradicate Roman mores but refashions them. This is especially true in his transformation of its cultural plots. Virgil’s paean to Rome’s great destiny is reworked in the lives, not of its great men, but its learned women, as Jerome unrolls his ascetic manifesto for Rome and its provinces prepared for the return of Christ. The novella is transformed into the vita of a girl whose acceptance of the celibate life ensures a celebrity hitherto confined to the martyrs of the past.

**The Anician Women Make Their Choices**

**Proba and Juliana**

The wealth, piety and influence, in Church and society, of the Aniciae are attested to in their correspondence with Jerome, Pelagius, Pope Innocent and Augustine. Further, Jerome, unlike Rufinus and Pelagius, intimates that they are familiar with the nuances of theological debate. The women have not ‘vanished’ at this point: they are present, engaged and, if convinced, may affect the course of the Pelagian dispute through their patronage. Jerome identifies Pelagius’ exhortations to perfection with the Origenists’ teaching of the ‘passionless’ state. Far from harking back to some irrelevant dispute, Jerome links Origenist theories with Pelagius’ teaching, because of the latter’s association, through patronage, with supporters of Melania the Elder and Rufinus and by extension with the Anicii. He is warning them that again they stand in danger of supporting heterodox beliefs.

They have emerged as resourceful and intelligent women by making their way from a dangerous Rome with their entourage and wealth intact. The story has been dramatised and embellished. Nevertheless, the reader can infer, as I have shown above, enough elements to regard the women as sufficiently worldly-wise to employ their wealth and status to negotiate trouble. When Jerome rises to their defence concerning collusion

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186 Rufinus wanted ‘weak’ women limited to reading the Scriptures. See Ruf., Apol. 2.7. See also Pelagius, *Ad Demetr.* 23.
188 For the interrelationships and alliances of the gens, see Laurence, “Proba, Juliana et Démétrias,” 138.
with the Visigoths and the breath of scandal in their dealings with Heraclian, he acts as a potential client but, at the same time, reveals their understanding of real-politik.

These women influenced the writing of this letter in other ways. Cain suggests that ‘Pelagius had enjoyed a longstanding and close association with Demetrias’ immediate family and had been supported financially by them during his time in Rome from the early 380s until 410’.190 Intertextual evidence shows that Juliana had written to Pelagius and would continue to support him.191 Despite Jerome’s caricature of him as a rustic ignoramus, Pelagius had a number of scholarly works to his credit.192 However, Rousseau suggests Jerome took issue with Pelagius, because he operated within the domus, which was essentially the space for women, and did not engage with learned men in the schola, like himself.193 Jerome must steer a course between eliciting support from the Aniciae but also resisting heterodoxy, so he never attacks Pelagius by name.

Yet the question remains: why did these women approach Jerome, in view of the animus he had displayed towards the domus over the years and evident in the irony of the early stages of the letter? What does it reveal about them? They may have been genuinely impressed by Jerome’s reputation. Dunphy sees the hand of Augustine behind the application to Jerome.194 Yet again this seems an example of always perceiving women as following the advice of men and consequently, they are rendered powerless.195 Augustine’s influence was not absolute. In 417, he wrote to Juliana as the head of the Anician domus in Rome.196 He warned her against Pelagius who was now a member of her household. He quotes her reply, where she assures him: ‘omnisque familia nostra adeo catholicam sequitur fidem, ut in nullam haeresim aliquando deviaverit’ (‘and our entire household follows the catholic faith in such a way that it has not gone astray into heresy at any time’).197 These are the comments of a lady who, speaking for all those in her charge, does not take criticism unchallenged, even from a bishop. Augustine’s reply – ‘Domum enim vestram, non parva Christi Ecclesiam deputamus’ (‘we regard your house, as no small church of Christ’) – is conciliatory, but

190 See Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 163; Brown, “Pelagius and His Supporters.”
191 Pelagius, Ad Demetr. 1.
192 For a discussion of their authenticity, see Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 165.
193 See Jerome, Ep. 50.3; Rousseau, “Jerome’s Search for Self-Identity,” 135.
195 See 23 above.
196 Augustine, Epp. 188.1.
197 Ibid.
nevertheless, firm in his warning that theological deviation is no small matter even when cloaked with appearances of piety:

nec sane parvus error illorum qui putant ex nobis nos habere si quid justitiae, continentiae, pietatis, castitatis in nobis est.

(nor, indeed, is it a trifling error of those who think that of ourselves we possess any inclination to justice, continence, piety, chastity.)

Rather than seeing Proba and Juliana as dominated by ecclesiastical superiors and thus able to pass off lightly Jerome’s insults of the past, I propose a different explanation: that Juliana maintained a connection with Pelagius, either through direct patronage or ties of amicitia with other senatorial families (including Paulinus of Nola) who had protected him. Brown suggests that the period before the attack on Rome represents the highpoint of lay patronage:

In order to enjoy a high standard of Christian culture, influential laymen were prepared in Rome to tolerate the occasional faux pas of their protégés.

Ties of patronage perhaps accounted for Juliana’s reluctance to cast Pelagius off. Furthermore, ecclesiastical opinion on Pelagius’ theology was by no means clear. He would subsequently be temporarily exonerated at the Council of Diospolis in 415. However, the invasion of Rome had led to division between the Christian and pagan elite. Was it punishment for clinging to or deserting the old gods? Christians in the West could not afford a division through heresy.

At the time of the writing of this letter, Pelagius’ theology was suspect. I suggest that, while Juliana was reluctant to abandon Pelagius entirely, she was sufficiently astute to realise the domus could not afford another scandal after the rumoured collaboration with the Goths and the bribery of Heraclian. This seems to be borne out in that the letter to Pelagius comes from Juliana alone, while Jerome’s letter comes ostensibly from both women, though Proba seems to have been the initiator, as Jerome singles her out for

198 Ibid.
200 Kelly, Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies, 318.
202 See 20 above.
attention. What is evident here is that the women are able to read political situations and to take steps in the interest of the *domus*. Survival often meant having a foot in both camps: Juliana supporting Pelagius; Proba making a tentative approach to Jerome.

Pelagius was eventually condemned as a heretic by Pope Zosimus. Jerome had already been excommunicated in 394 and readmitted to the Church in 397 by John of Jerusalem. He would be temporarily driven out of Bethlehem, allegedly by Pelagius’ supporters in 417. These events reveal how high the stakes were for these men to have financial and political protection. The Anician women had it within their power to influence their futures. Jerome speaks of Pelagius taking himself off to his ‘Amazons’, a possible reference to the formidable qualities of the Aniciae. In his letter to Ctesiphon, he warns against those who harbour heretics, in what again seems a veiled reference to the Aniciae.

Proba’s interest in scholarship and asceticism was confirmed in a letter from Pope Celestine to Theodosius II on 15 March 432 that reported her death and a large bequest to the priests, monasteries and monks of the East. Perhaps she perceived the barbs beneath the plea for patronage from Jerome. Laurence sums up the senior Aniciae in their piety and independence. Like Marcella, they perceived him essentially as a client who might be discarded:

> comme l’avaient fort bien compris les directeurs spirituels de ces femmes, une grande dame qui aspire à devenir *serva* Christi ne cesse pas pour autant d’être la *domina* qu’elle a toujours été.

Even the seemingly biddable Eustochium, after years in Bethlehem was capable of exercising the authority of a *domina*.

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208 Pope Caelestinus, *Ep.*, 23, 6, (PL 50)  
209 Laurence, “Proba, Juliana et Démétrias,” 163.  
210 See 124 above.
Demetrias’ Choices

More can be known about Demetrias, as a betrothed of Christ, because of the position and wealth that gave her freedoms denied other women. Other women are not of much interest to Christian writers of this period. Nobody who appears in the *vitae* or even the letters of the male Christian mentors is of low birth. Demetrias’ gender is important because it is only as a woman that she can be the heroine of the new Rome and the counter-cultural signifier of the reversal of pride and civic achievement so dear to Jerome’s heart.

But Jerome did not simply exploit the women to proclaim his superiority over other men. He brought to the women the benefits of his knowledge and ascetic experience. Second, Jerome promises them fame through his writing. He ‘writes’ them as the leading characters in a saga for a new ‘Christian’ Empire. Demetrias will be the flag-bearer for Jerome’s new city. Her dedication as a virgin reveals the transcendental nature of virginity. It is not flattery that causes Jerome to write of the provinces rejoicing in news of her dedication. He believed that celibacy could transform the world and begin to regain Eden in preparation for the final resurrection on Christ’s return. Third, with Jerome as Demetrias’ mentor, the family will be able to employ his skills to distance them from any of the political fall-out coming from the Gothic invasion and the Anician response to it. Finally, they will, after considering the arguments, have secured for themselves an orthodox theologian in the coming theological storm.

Certain external evidence supports these conclusions. Both Jerome and Pelagius had advised self-effacement in charitable works and discouraged the raising of buildings. Brown describes the situation in Rome on Demetrias’ return to live there as one of *rapprochement* between pagan and Christian. Its citizens gloried in its role as a self-confident ‘holy’ city, exemplified in the raising of a magnificent basilica.

We meet Demetrias again after her return to Rome. She had taken on the *auctoritas* within the Anicii family that had been modelled by her mother and grandmother. Jacobs refers to a letter ascribed either to Leo I or Prosper of Aquitaine, *De vera humilitate*, commissioned by Demetrias. Her mother and grandmother had also sought advice

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from the most prominent spiritual directors of their day.\textsuperscript{214} The writer takes up the horticultural image from 1 Cor 3.6–7 in Augustine and Jerome, describing her life as ‘the tender seed has received robust strength, and the tree of your manner of life has brought forth fruits worthy of its generosity’.\textsuperscript{215} The letter is addressed to Demetrias, ‘maturum et eruditio animo’, and Jerome would have been content to see her described as ‘of a mind mature and learned’ for that is what he offered his women and that is the harvest he hoped to reap.\textsuperscript{216} \textit{De vera humilitate} attempts to integrate her Christianity with secular \textit{nobilitas}.\textsuperscript{217} This was the old style Anician Christianity that Jerome had abhorred, but had been realistic enough to see as inevitable.\textsuperscript{218} But there are also significant warnings against specific Pelagian doctrines, such as the denial of original sin, indicating that Demetrias was selective in what she had accepted from all her prospective mentors in 414.\textsuperscript{219}

An inscription remains in the \textit{Liber pontificalis} of the endowment of a church to St Stephen in Rome under Pope Leo by ‘Demetrias virgo’.\textsuperscript{220} More in the nature of a private chapel and mausoleum than a public basilica, it represented an independence from episcopal control.\textsuperscript{221} Demetrias lived ascetically but Cooper wryly comments that ‘ascetic renunciation and personal wealth seem to have sat comfortably together in the minds of senatorial Christians’.\textsuperscript{222} Furthermore, Neil, in contrast to Brown’s thesis, regards money as resting firmly in the hands of the rich rather than bishops and that the presence of the quiet, anonymous giving recommended in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures was ‘elusive’.\textsuperscript{223} She writes:

As we have seen in relation to Demetrias Anicia, the model favoured by the majority in the West involved minimal self-sacrifice, and respected

\begin{itemize}
\item Augustine, \textit{Epp.} 130, 131 to Proba.
\item Krabbe takes Prosper to be the author of this quote from \textit{De vera humilitate} 1.49–51. For an endorsement of Krabbe’s scholarship, see J. J. Thierry, “Review: \textit{Epistula ad Demetriadem de vera humilitate},” \textit{Mnemosyne} 21, no. 2–3 (1968): 320–1.
\item Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 748.
\item Ibid., 747.
\item See 155–6 above.
\item \textit{De vera humilitate} 10.31–3. See Krabbe, \textit{Epistula ad Demetriadem de vera humilitate}.
\item Jacobs, “Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity,” 740. The plaque can be seen in the Museo delle Terrae.
\end{itemize}
the traditional need of donors for positive publicity for acts of euergetism.224

This may be construed as independence of action on Demetrias’ part in the face of Jerome’s exhortations. Demetrias rejected Jerome’s advice to give alms anonymously as this would ‘blot out Anician status’ and chose, instead to ‘Christianise traditional forms of public munificence, through the construction of a church’, thus demonstrating independence in the exercise of her asceticism.225

The senior Anician women had provided a model of strong-minded action that embraced Christian piety, but also protected the _fama_ of the _domus_ and in the end would act to its greater glory in the old senatorial tradition. Demetrias would follow this model in the exercise of patronage and power. Yet she did represent a rigorous and learned asceticism in the Rome from which Jerome had been driven so many decades before. Perhaps she represents for Jerome his final triumph, as Duval comments:

La vraie victoire quasi posthume, de Jérome ne fut pas Paula ni Eustochium, ni même la petite Paula, pas même Mélanie la Jeune, puisqu’elle quitta elle aussi Rome, fut-ce en des circonstances particulières, pour finalement gagner la Palestine, mais Démétriaide, qui revint dans la capital et y vécut jusqu’à l’époque de Léon le Grand.226

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Chapter 5: Matrons

Creating a Dominant Discourse

Advocates of asceticism, in order to construct a demarcation from the world set about creating a text, since Christianity had always been a movement based on text.\(^2\)

However, we have seen in Chapter 2 above, that asceticism itself was by no means monolithic.\(^3\) Neither Helvidius nor Jovinian had sought to dissuade Christians from the celibate life, but rather worked to remove any sense of its superiority.\(^4\) Ambrosiaster, a contemporary of Jerome, provided a vigorous defence of marriage and procreation, rejected Jerome’s ‘virginal feminism’, yet disagreed with Jovinian.\(^5\)

Asceticism, while competing with other strands of Christian discourse, was adept (especially through advocates such as Jerome) at being ‘able to absorb in a highly opportunistic manner, whatever might be useful from secular rhetoric and vocabulary’.\(^6\) The ascetic discourse proved so successful that by the late fourth century the propaganda for dedicated virginity was such that there was ‘scarcely any major Christian figure who neglected to write about it’.\(^7\) This flurry of writing, as we have seen above, led to a plurality of interpretations of the ‘bride of Christ’.\(^8\) A spiritual hierarchy resulted, placing the unmarried above the married. Jerome’s discourse is distinguished from that of others, such as Methodius and Ambrose, by the ferocity of his attack on married women and paradoxically his desire to liberate women and promulgate serious scholarship among them.

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1. The only matrons listed as receiving a letter from Jerome are Laeta and Celantia, from Gaul (Ep. 148). But as the style and content of the latter letter differ so markedly, it is generally regarded as spurious and so not included in this study.
3. For a lucid account of the issues, see Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God* (London: Routledge, 1995), 38–47.
4. For the theology of views in opposition, see Hunter, “Helvidius, Jovinian and the Virginity of Mary.”
7. Ibid., 171.
8. See 87ff., above.
A Dissonance between Writing and Practice

This vituperation of women and marriage has provoked an array of responses down through the ages. In Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘The Wife of Bath’, the libidoinous wife takes Jerome’s attacks on married women from his _contra Iovinianum_ and parodies them. Misogynistic views, derived from Jerome’s works, obviously had currency among intellectuals in the Middle Ages. Martin Luther, in his ‘Table Talk’, observes that Jerome would have written differently, had he a wife.

Yet Jerome had close relationships with women. Clark cites his reference to the company of dedicated virgins, where ‘lectio adsiduitatem, adsiduitas familiaritatem, familiaritas fiduciam fecerat’ (‘study made for congenial association, association for familiarity and familiarity made for trust’), was ‘a near classic ancient definition of friendship’. His warm friendships with women were in contrast to Ambrosiaster, who, though more tolerant of marriage, argued that women were not made in the image of God. Nevertheless, women who held to the old Roman order of concern for family and husband were not his friends:

Habeant nuptiae suum tempus et titulum: mihi virginitas in Maria dedicatur et Christo.

(Let marriage have its time and title: for me virginity is consecrated in the person of Mary and Christ.)

The dissonance between what Jerome wrote and his conduct can be understood by investigating the ‘antisexual, antimarital and anireproductive strategies’ in his theological writings. These reflect more than antipathy to women. Rather they articulate the working out of his socio-political vision underpinned by his eschatology, particularly that of the resurrection life. Further, Jerome’s employment of satire as a strategy to promote asceticism requires an understanding of strong contemporary

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10 Martin Luther, _Weimarer Ausgabe Tischreden_, vol. 1 (Weimar: Herman Bölau, 2009), 145.
11 Jerome, _Ep._ 45.2; Clark’s translation: ‘Our studies made for constant association, which ripened into familiarity, which in turn produced mutual trust.’
13 Jerome, _Ep._ 22.18.
opposition despite the triumphalism of the literary sources. Anti Arjava points out that Jerome’s contemporaries did not regard him as misogynistic, especially the women who sought his company. On the contrary, he was mocked because of his attention to them:

Rideat forsitan infidelis lector, me in muliercularum laudibus immorari, qui, si recordetur sanctas feminas, comites Domini Salvatoris … se potius superbiae, quam nos condemnabit ineptiarum, qui virtutes non sexu sed animo iudicamus.

(The unbelieving reader may perhaps laugh at me for lingering so long on the praises of mere women; if he will but remember the holy women, the companions of our Lord and saviour … he will find himself guilty of pride rather than condemning me of folly, who judge people’s virtue not by their sex but by their character.)

Misogyny and misogamy were present in Roman literature but the satire, even when it was savage, was cautionary and caused laughter at human foibles. But the destruction of marriage was not at issue, as it was essential to the social fabric of Rome. Jerome took the body of literature and turned it into a weapon to remove marriage as normative.

We have seen above in Chapters 3 and 4 Jerome’s passionate expounding of his vision for a Rome that presaged the ‘angelic life’ in preparation for the return of Christ. The dismantling of the institution of marriage, as a societal norm, and the reversal of Pliny’s cursus honorum for women, repositioning the betrothed virgin at the apex of honour, above the matron, or even the military or political hero, was central to his strategy. In Jerome’s new discourse, Pliny’s model matron, relentlessly promoting her husband’s reputation and nurturing the next generation of Roman citizens had no place. Such a woman, living in complete concordia with her husband, as good citizens did with the state, represented the high point of classical feminine achievement. Judith Grubbs maintains that:

The institution of marriage was fundamental to Greco-Roman society.
Marriage and the begetting of children were considered the duty of all

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16 Jerome, Ep. 127.5.
17 See Ch. 2, passim.
Roman citizens, and the same ideology is found among the cities of the Greek East and in contemporary Judaism.\(^{19}\)

Augustus and his successors had encouraged marriage and the bearing of children through the punitive Pappian-Poppaeaen laws, and marriage was to remain the norm for Roman society for purposes of social stability and in retaining wealth in relationships of amicitia. The edict of 320 heralded changes indicating the influence of the ascetic discourse within society:

Those persons who were considered celibates under the old law shall be freed from the threatening terrors of the statutes and shall live just as if supported by the bond of matrimony in the number of married men, and all shall have equal status with respect to accepting what each is entitled to. Nor indeed shall any person be considered childless, and the disabilities attached to that term shall not harm him. We apply this provision also with respect to women and we release all of them indiscriminately from the legal compulsions imposed like yokes on their necks.\(^{20}\)

The consent of the paterfamilias in legitimising any marriage was essential.\(^{21}\) Jerome’s aim was to break the power of the (usually pagan) paterfamilias around whom the reputation of the family revolved.\(^{22}\) Money, destined for the glory of the family through its male members, would be invested through its women in the poor or in religious scholarship. Jerome, like Chrysostom and Augustine, gathered people in such a way as to set himself up as a paterfamilias.\(^{23}\) I contend here that Jerome modelled a paterfamilias in the context of an Eden-like relationship with Paula, free from the judgment of the Fall. Marriage was a Scriptural trope so it could not be entirely ignored. The husband was still the paterfamilias to the extent that he was the leader, but it was a transformed relationship.\(^{24}\) A daughter lived under her father’s protection but he ought


\(^{20}\) Cod. Theod. 8.16.1

\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) See 94 above.

\(^{23}\) See Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 110. For its expansion into a quasi episcopacy see 207ff. below.

\(^{24}\) Jerome, *Ep. 76*. 
not, as in the old dispensation, seek a husband for her. In fact, Jerome saw himself in loco parentis where virgins were concerned, since he prepared them for the Bridegroom. He was not concerned to define the role for other men.

The senatorial families of the fourth century, even Christians, generally adhered to the conservative social patterns of the past. Asceticism, in its efforts to demonstrate a clear line of demarcation from this culture, emphasised the surrender of family obligations in the service of Christ and the superiority of living ‘as the angels’ rather than the growth of disciples through the offspring of Christian families. Jerome said of Paula’s granddaughter: ‘Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani’ (‘Christians are made, not born’).

We have seen how Jerome used the cultural plots expressed in the classical literature, so prized by the nobilitas, redeploying these texts to create a new discourse. The narrative of the Aeneid was centred on a relatively insignificant member of the nobilitas, Eustochium. The Aniciae were also re-written in Virgilian tropes promising a glory more potent than the illustrious achievements of their past. Demetrias became the heroine of a novella/vita. Similarly, Jerome employed satire to exemplify reprehensible behaviour, both in clergy and certain women. He uses satire to dismantle the Roman norm of marriage as the space for procreation. He attacks as moral weakness feminine devotion to a husband’s reputation. To create a Christian ascetic discourse, he uses his own texts, commentaries and letters, and paradoxically the literary canon of Rome.

Yarborough and Chastagnol inferred the role of aristocratic women in the conversion of men from literary sources. Salzman, however, proposes some conflict between the epigraphic and literary evidence. Cooper expatiates on this:

we generally imagine the religious changes which swept the later Roman Empire as resulting from devout Christian women, who enforced the views of their clerical friends. Yet the study does find a discrepancy between the impression drawn from the literary sources, and a low

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27 See 77; 117–21; 130–3; 147ff; 259.
28 See 96–7; 70–1 above.
incidence of conversion through intermarriage attested in existing inscriptions.\textsuperscript{31}

Cooper regards the rhetorical \textit{topos} of womanly influence for good or ill as a ‘cultural continuity with the earlier Empire’, where it was a means of extolling or impugning a man in performance of the public good, irrespective of the actual character of the woman concerned.\textsuperscript{32} She argues that texts that refer to the power of women in the conversion process are a distraction from the struggle that emerged between two groups of late Roman men:

Married men in positions of civic or cultural importance (some married to baptized women, some themselves baptized, others strictly polytheist) and celibate men, usually of lesser rank, who wished to advise the married.\textsuperscript{33}

Married men concerned with the old civic values could be subverted by rhetorical insinuations that either their women were morally suspect, or unduly influential in decision making. Cooper argues that the celibate man was less vulnerable and so the movement away from civic responsibility, including the production of children, occurred, as power shifted to the advocates of asceticism. Yet, while Jerome’s attacking of married women as wanton, lazy, greedy and mindless did impugn their husbands, his purposes were larger. As he aimed at formulating a new Rome, he also sought to benefit the women. In seeking to extract women from the male authority figures, he offered them a glory in their own right and a marked degree of independence.\textsuperscript{34}

Cooper’s argument seems to overlook the extent to which celibate mentors were also open to attack through the women of their circle, on the grounds of impropriety and cupidity.\textsuperscript{35} Laeta’s instrumentality in her husband’s conversion, Cooper claims, is the \textit{locus classicus} for the study of women as agents of Christianisation.\textsuperscript{36} In fact, Jerome never claimed to be an evangelist for asceticism (or Christianity) but rather the premier guide to achieving the heavenly crown.\textsuperscript{37} And he never advised women to marry in the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 155.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 162.
\textsuperscript{34} See especially 147ff. above.
\textsuperscript{35} See exposition of Jerome \textit{Ep.} 45 in Ch. 1.
\textsuperscript{36} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 107.1.
\textsuperscript{37} See 86 above for example of the Virgin Mary and Jerome \textit{Epp.} 22.23; 130.19.
hope of converting their bridegrooms. This ran contrary to his manifesto. We see in
Cooper’s argument a pattern that this thesis has contested: the reduction of women to
objects without any capacity to operate within their social framework. As I have argued
in the case of Eustochium and the Aniciae, women had a far greater influence on the
success and form of asceticism than simply being ‘written’ for the benefit of male
competition. Recovering traces of married women and their achievements and their
effect on Jerome’s writing is explored in this chapter.

In order to deflect women from their traditional path, Jerome set about ridiculing the
matron who by her dress, piety and demeanour accommodated herself to society’s
norm. This was not an entirely negative activity on Jerome’s part, since he offered
aristocratic woman the opportunity to become a Christian elite. Cameron comments on
the fluidity of the old lines of social demarcation by the fourth century compared to the
first two centuries CE where there was ‘a strong horizontal demarcation line between
the educated elite and the rest of society where the elite controlled military and civil
power by ‘elaborate regulating mechanisms’. The separation of the mostly illiterate
from the elite was ‘reinforced by the high level of traditional literary culture practiced
by the elite’. However, by the fourth century, civil and military power had become
separate and the elite augmented by the growth in government positions. Further, the
old demarcation lines of the traditional culture had been challenged by an alternative,
Christian one and a new ‘institutionalized elite’, namely, Christian bishops had
emerged.

Jerome accommodated Christianity to these aspirations by offering in asceticism a life
to a class that was constantly seeking to set itself above the common herd and the
confusion Christianity had introduced. Aristocratic Christians would reassert their role
as ‘pars melior generis humani’ (‘the better part of humanity’). Under his tutelage,
noble women would have access to a literary culture that they could engage in without
recourse to the rhetorical schools and which in turn gave them influence on the new
power structure within the Empire.

38 Cameron, Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire, 30.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Aline Rousselle describes how Roman patrician matrons were usually celibate, after producing the requisite three children to ensure their inheritance. These female citizens were protected from the dangers of prolonged child bearing by an underclass of female concubines. Therefore, Christian members of the senatorial elite faced the problem of demonstrating to their pagan peers how celibacy was an ascetic virtue. The extreme self-control that asceticism required in all areas would demonstrate the fruits of devotion to Christ. A new text witnessing to this heroic virtue was called for. Jerome demanded chastity in men for whom concubinage was denied, but women were shown that celibacy was not merely expedient but heroic and to reject it was contemptible.

Jerome was indebted to his translation of Origen’s commentary on the Song of Songs for his early success in Rome and much of his theology of virginity. Alfons Fürst points out that in the commentaries of Origen, ‘the main domains of philosophical thought provide the underlying structure of the biblical texts’. These domains comprised ethics, physics and theology but the Song of Songs was also treated as epoptic, a concept that Jerome enthusiastically embraced in his application of the Bride to the human soul. This employment of the hermeneutics of classical philosophy to the Scriptures in support of virginity appealed to some educated women. Moreover, as Jerome dedicated his commentaries, now perceived as philosophical works, to women, their status was enhanced. But while Jerome embraced Origen’s methodology, I maintain that, because of his strong identification with Paul, he also saw marriage as leading to the ‘divided heart’. The ideal Roman matron whose principal concern was for her husband’s gloria could not give whole-hearted service to Christ; hence the strong advice to Eustochium and Demetrias to avoid the company of married women, because they discussed their husbands’ accomplishments.

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43 Jerome, Ep. 67.3; see 69–71 above.
46 Jerome, Ep. 22.1.
47 For the prestige of philosophical study, see Winrich Löhr, “Christianity as Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project,” VChr. 64, no. 2 (2010): 163. This theme is developed with regard to widows below in Ch. 6.
48 See 75 above.
49 See Jerome, Epp. 22.16; 130.18 respectively.
Jerome’s use of satire satisfied a tension where his own delight in classical literature was in conflict with what he saw as his ascetic labour, the translation and exegesis of the Scriptures. In his attacks on the sexuality of women, he could indulge himself in the satirists of the past, in the name of serving Christ. Therefore, it is not accidental that the letter to Eustochium contains not only the account of his dream, where he is chastised for his love of literature above studying the Scriptures, but also the greatest collection of caustic depictions of women both original, and derived from the writers of Rome’s past. Jerome’s later works, though not free from negative descriptions of women, are much more restrained. Further, in his use of satire, Jerome demonstrates to the aristocratic men that his rhetorical skills match and even surpass theirs, and further he offers their women an opportunity to discredit the misogyny of the classical past by their self-control.

While Jerome regarded corruption of the soul’s devotion to Christ as having its genesis in sexual congress, marriage was a reality in Roman social life and it was also an important biblical motif in the marriage between the Church and Christ at the parousia. Jerome’s extension of the metaphor has already been discussed above. But, I contend that when Jerome settled with Paula in Bethlehem, he was implicitly presenting to the world an ideal Christian ‘marriage’ where they ‘lived as the angels’. This was essentially a transformation of the Roman ideal of the perfect wife. But more than this, by ridiculing the fertile Roman matron, Jerome sought to liberate women from the consequences of the Fall in childbirth and male oppression. Further, by having women renounce their desire for marriage, Jerome was able to enter into friendship with some women in a manner close to the Roman ideal. Women provided him with the emotional support and loyalty that he could not have with men in the competitive male elitism of Late Antiquity.

The Rhetoric of Misogyny

The advocacy of singleness over marriage is not intrinsically antifeminist but the male pagan writers had depicted the disadvantages of marriage as centred entirely on the

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51 Jerome, Ep. 22.30.
52 See especially the letter to Demetrias.
53 See 87ff. above.
54 See 84ff. above.
55 See 4; 170 above.
56 See 195ff., 231ff. below.
shortcomings of women. In his arguments against marriage, Jerome too would focus on the meretricious behaviour of women, but his theological basis depended on his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:

volo autem vos sine sollicitudine esse, qui sine uxorē est sollicitus est quae Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deō qui autem cum uxorē est sollicitus est quae sunt mundi quomodo placeat uxorē et divisus est et mulier innupta et virgo cogitat quae Domini sunt ut sit sancta et corpore et spiritu quae autem nupta est cogitat quae sunt mundi quomodo placeat viro.

(But I want you to be free from concern. One who is without a wife is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please God. But one who has a wife is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife. He is divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in both body and spirit; but one who is married dwells on the things of the world, how she may please her husband.)

Celibacy was a litmus test for devotion to Christ. This, I suggest, lies behind the vehemence of his attacks both to motivate women to persevere or to dissuade from embarking on matrimony.

Averil Cameron suggests asking certain questions in order to interpret texts in Late Antiquity, such as the nature of the texts, how they represented Christian truths and how they were related to the general culture of the Roman Empire. These are useful tools for examining Jerome’s treatises. The nature of the texts about non-ascetic women is polemical – typical of Jerome’s dealing with all perceived enemies of Christ. These include: women who flaunt their sexuality; clergy, monks and dissolute youths who prey on women; and ‘false virgins’. Through his satire, Jerome is constructing a new Rome by attacking the foundations for the power networks of its leading families. In subverting marriage, we have seen above, he placed the unmarried girl ahead of the matron. The dedicated girl shines in Roman society as a symbol of heroic virtue,

58 See 1 Cor 7.35: ‘I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.’
59 Cameron, Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire, 3.
standing in place not only of the martyrs, but also of the classical heroes of the past. Moreover, she represents the certainty of the soul’s unity with Christ. The Roman matron, however, is relegated to the role of bearer of virgins which will compensate for her lapse in becoming pregnant:

Laudo nuptias, laudo coniugium, sed quia mihi virgines generant: lego de spinis rosas, de terra aurum, de concha margaritum.

(I praise marriage, I praise the wedded state but only because they produce virgins for me: I gather the roses from the thorns, the gold from the dirt, the pearl from the shell.)

In drawing on the literature of classical misogyny, Jerome was seeking to reach the class with sufficient *otium* to read and appreciate his allusions and style. Jerome also pronounced his satire as curative:

Medici, quos vocant chirugicos, crudeles putantur et miseri sunt … Ita se natura habet, ut amara sit veritas, blanda vitia aestimentur.

(Doctors, of the branch who are called surgeons, are considered to be cruel and are pitiable … Human nature is such that truth is bitter and vices are regarded as pleasant.)

He applies the conceit of the surgeon’s knife and cautery to cure moral ills. This explains the savagery of his theatrical cameos:

Praecedit caveas basternarum ordo semivir et rubentibus buccis farsa distenditur, ut eas putes maritos non amisisse, sed quae rerere … quia maritorum expertae dominatum viduatutis praefcrunt libertatem, castae vocantur et nonnae et post cenam dubiam apostolos somniant.

(A row of eunuchs goes ahead of their cavernous litters, with their red lips and skin sleek over their plumpness, you would think that they had not so much lost a husband as to be seeking one … since they have experienced the domination of a husband they prefer the freedom of

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60 See 117–21; 130ff. above.
being a widow, are called chaste nuns and after a dodgy meal they dream of apostles.)

The animal hunger of the women is emphasised by the use of ‘caveas’ which suggests they lurk in a den like wild beasts. Even religious aspirations are overlaid with sexual fantasies. They are held up to ridicule as if on a public stage. Frequently, this passion for invective and the vivid satirical picture overrides any sense of propriety. His letter of consolation to Marcella, on the death of the young widow Blesilla, becomes a diatribe on the foibles of elderly widows.

Early apologists had adopted the tradition of vilification, including satire, from the law courts, so that invective became an integral part of Christian propaganda. Jerome adopted this approach with gusto. He marshalled all his skills in forensic rhetoric against the unreconstructed matron.

‘Mad, bad and dangerous to know’: The Married Woman in Jerome’s Theology

Jerome’s campaign to undermine the status of the Roman matron received many setbacks but he never wavered in his view that marriage and married women were displeasing to God. Yet, Jerome denies that he disparages matrimony when directly challenged:

Dicat aliquis: “Et audes nuptiis detrahere, quae a domino benedictae sunt” Non est detrahere nuptiis, cum illis virginitas antefertur. Nemo malum bono conparat. Glorientur et nuptae, cum a virginibus sunt secundae.

(Someone may say, “Are you daring to detract from marriage, a state which has been blessed by the Lord?” It is not detracting from marriage when virginity is preferred to it. No one compares something good against something bad. Let married women also rejoice in the fact that they rank next in succession to virgins.)

64 Jerome, Ep. 22.16. The phrase ‘cenam dubiam’ also occurs in Terence, Phormia 342.
66 Jerome, Ep. 22.19.
Clearly, marriage ranks below virginity. How far below becomes evident in his diatribe to the senator Pammachius who remonstrated with him after the furore of his attack on Jovinian. A reply to Domnio, a supporter, who had written in the same vein as Pammachius, is similar in tone ending memorably with:

… echo clamoris mei: “Non damno nuptias, non damno coniugium.” Et ut certius sententiam meam teneat, volo omnes qui propter nocturnos forsitan metus soli cubitare non possunt uxorcs ducere.

(… the echo of my cry: “I do not condemn marriage, I do not condemn wedlock.” Indeed, and so that he may apprehend more clearly my meaning, I wish everyone to take a wife who, perhaps because of their fear of the night, are unable to sleep alone.)

The metaphor of the ‘openness’ (to carnality) of the sexually experienced, as opposed to the ‘closed’ nature of the virgin body, recurs in Jerome for the renunciation of the flesh and the embracing of the spiritual in asceticism. Cox Miller’s interpretation of the closed nature of the virgin body has been expanded to encompass Jerome’s wider vision for Rome. Jerome presents a theology of marriage for the new dispensation that both looks forward to the kingdom of heaven and prepares for it in the present.

He sets the scene for his dogma. The power of the Devil is seen to be at work in the genitalia of humanity:

… audi, quid de diabolo suspicetur: “Virtus eis in lumbis et potestas eis in umbilico.” Honeste viri mulierisque genitalia inmutatis sunt appelata nominibus.

(… listen, this is what [Job] surmised about the Devil: “His strength is in his loins and his power is in the navel.” The terms have been changed for decency’s sake but male and female genitalia are what were denoted.)

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68 Jerome, Ep. 22.25, taken from Song of Songs, 5.3. See also Ep. 22.11, 23; and for the dangers of freedom of movement, 22.29.

69 Job 40.16.

70 Jerome, Ep. 22.11.
This quotation refers to the Behemoth whom Jerome sees as a type of the Devil. Procreation, even within a lawful marriage relationship, is essentially the work of the Devil. Jerome spells this out for Eustochium:

Omnis igitur adversus viros diaboli virtus in lubis est, omnis in umbilico contra feminas fortitudo.

(Therefore in his attack on men all the devil’s strength is in the loins; against women all his boldness is in the navel.)\(^{71}\)

He catalogues for her the mighty men of the Old Testament whose downfall was desire.\(^{72}\) Yet, Jerome distanced himself from the teachings of the Marcionites who denied the inspiration of the Old Testament, and also from Tatian:

Nec Tatiani principis Encratitarum errore decepti coitum spurcum putamus.

(Nor do we think that all intercourse is obscene not having been led astray by the error of Tatian, the leader of the Encratites.)\(^{73}\)

Nevertheless, desire outside of that for procreation is sinful:

… insita a Deo ob liberorum creationem, si fines suos egressa fuerit, redundat in vitium et quadam lege naturae in coitum gestit erumpere.

(… implanted by God for the procreation of children, if it will have exceeded its ordained limits, flows on to become sin and by the law of nature delights to burst through into mere intercourse.)\(^{74}\)

Jerome seems moderate when he writes to Eustochium that married women have ‘ordinem suum’ (‘their own order’), with which they should be content. He then dismisses them from the argument. However, he goes on to express his purpose in writing this letter:

… ut intellegeres tibi exeunti de Sodoma timendum esse Loth uxoris exemplum.

\(^{71}\) Jerome, Ep. 22.11.
\(^{72}\) Jerome, Ep. 22.12.
\(^{73}\) Jerome, Ep. 48.2.
\(^{74}\) Jerome, Ep. 54.9.
(So that you may realise that you are escaping from Sodom and that the example of Lot’s wife must be heeded.\textsuperscript{75}"

Jerome slides from speaking about married women to the story of an Old Testament matron, Lot’s wife, who met a terrible death.\textsuperscript{76} To suggest that marriage is the ‘Sodom’, a byword for depravity that Eustochium is to flee (and that looking back will result in a terrible judgment), Jerome seems to reject marriage. However, sometimes Jerome’s use of extreme language is designed to contrast rather than to deny the other a place.

The implication is clear. Worldly concerns inevitably make up the life of married women and their company may turn aside the celibate. So at times Jerome resorts to crude language to describe even a social visit among women:

\begin{quote}
Eas autem virgines viduasque, quae otiosae et curiosae domus circumueunt matronarum, quae rubore frontis adtrito parasites vicere mimorum, quasi quasdam pestes abice. “Corrumpunt mores bonos confabulationes pessimae.” Nulla illis nisi ventris cura est et quae ventri proxima.
\end{quote}

(Avoid like the plague those young women and widows who are idle and nosey and who go about the houses of married women. They trump even the parasites in a mime with their unblushing cheek. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” And these women care for nothing apart from their bellies and what is closest to that area.\textsuperscript{77}"

Jerome also resumes his Pauline persona, giving a Scriptural imprimatur to his teaching as he echoes words from 1 Tim 5.13:

\begin{quote}
simul autem et otiosae discunt circumire domos non solum otiosae sed et verbosae et curiosae loquentes quae non oportet.
\end{quote}

(At the same time being idle they also learn to go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about unsuitable things.)

\textsuperscript{75} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.2.
\textsuperscript{76} Gen 19.26.
\textsuperscript{77} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.29.
He includes Paul’s quote from Menander: ‘Evil communications corrupt good manners.’\textsuperscript{78} Once again, he employs classical authors to challenge another prized institution, marriage. Furthermore, he spells out what the topics of conversation might be (merely hinted at by Paul), where indulgence in food and lust are linked together. Jerome repeats his view that the virgin must avoid married women and stay enclosed within her home. Ironically, the words from 1 Tim 5.13, in context, advocate marriage as a remedy to gadding about and gossip. In addition, Jerome speculates as to why Paul did not make virginity mandatory, reinforcing the elitist nature of asceticism and his eschatological focus that his women are being prepared for heaven:

Quia maioris est mercis, quod non cogitur et offertur, quia, si fuisset virginitas imperata, nuptiae videbantur ablatae et durissimum erat contra naturam cogere angelorumque vitam hominibus extorquere et id quodam more damnare, quod conditum est.

(Because, what is offered rather than exacted is of greater value; because, if virginity had been commanded, it would have appeared that marriage had been revoked. It would have been a very harsh task to compel them to act contrary to their nature and to extort from mortals the life of the angels and to condemn, to a certain extent, what was established by law.)\textsuperscript{79}

Jerome seems to imply that the maintenance of virginity in some way deals with the problem of original sin, perhaps drawing on the Eve-Mary recapitulation narrative we have seen above:

Et ut scias virginitatem esse naturae, nuptias post delictum: virgo nascitur caro de nuptiis in fructu reddens, quod in radice perdiderat.

(So that you may know that virginity is in accordance with nature and that marriage came after the transgression that had been committed; I tell you that virgin flesh is born of marriage giving back in the fruit what it had lost in the root.)\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} 1 Cor 15.33.
\textsuperscript{79} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.20.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
Even the chaste matron, Laeta, who has asked for advice in raising her daughter as a dedicated virgin, is rebuked:

Pro insita tibi pudicitia non ambigere, quin praecederes filiam et primam Dei sententiam secunda evangelii lege mutares.

(I would not doubt your inherent love of chastity, with the result that you would come ahead of the girl and exchange the first dispensation of God for the second law of the Gospel.)

For Jerome, marriage belongs to the old dispensation.

Married women are perceived as vicious in their opposition to the ascetic life:

Exin fama de mendacio, quae, cum ad matrones pervenerit et earum linguis fuerit ventilata, provincias penetrat. Videas plerasque rabido ore saevire et tincta facie, viperinis orbibus, dentibus pumicatis carpere Christianos.

(Thereupon gossip based on lies, which will soon have reached married women and been bandied about on their tongues, will go through the provinces. You may see many such females frothing at the mouth in rage and with their painted faces, viperish glances, and teeth polished with pumice tearing into Christians.)

This is a set piece with Jerome showing off his skills in attacking women’s appearance. But words are important to Jerome; the way people speak reflects their hearts and these women are guilty of ‘adultery of the tongue’ against which Jerome warned Eustochium. But the nastiness of Jerome’s attack, I believe, suggests agency on the part of powerful, married women, not only men, who resisted his teaching. So Jerome marshals the forces of ridicule and calumny to undermine their influence on potential postulants.

82 Laeta and Toxotius eventually lived together celibately; Jerome, Ep. 108.27.
83 Jerome, Ep. 54.5.
84 See 110 above.
Motherhood Diminished

Jerome depicts child-bearing, the glory of the Roman matron, in the grossest terms. In his discourse on the education of the younger Paula, he urges her mother Laeta not to allow her to bathe with married women, in case ‘aliae tumentibus uteris praefertant foeditatem’ (‘they are swollen with pregnancy, [and] present a disgusting spectacle’). He finds all aspects of pregnancy repugnant:

Quid angustiarum habeant nuptiae, didicisti in ipsis nuptiis et quasi coturnicum carnibus usque ad nausiam saturata es. Amarissimam choleram tuae sensere fauces, egessisti acescentes et morbidos cibos, relevasti aestuantem stomachum: quid vis rursus ingerere, quod tibi noxium fuit? “Canis revertens ad vomitum suum et sus ad volutabrum luti”. (The difficulties that lie in marriage, you have learnt about in marriage itself. You have been sated to the point of nausea “as with the flesh of quails”. Your gullet has felt bile at its bitterest; you have had the experience of vomiting up the sour food that made you ill, of relieving your churning stomach. Why would you seek to put into it again what was so harmful for you? “The dog returns to its vomit and the sow to its muddy wallow.”)

He goes on to speak of a longed-for grandchild soiling his grandfather’s neck: family pathos degenerates into farce. The final sentence appears to give Scriptural imprimatur to Jerome’s dogma that the bearing of children is reverting to the ways of the world. This is typical of Jerome’s methodology. The best that can be said for marriage is that it is ‘secunda post naufragium tabula est’ (‘a plank following a shipwreck’).

Nothing is attractive about family life:

non me nunc laudes virginitatis esse dicturum, quam probasti optime, eam cum secuta es, nec enumeraturum molestias nuptiarum, quomodo

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85 Jerome, Ep. 107.11. ‘Foeditas’ suggests something which is physically repellant and disgusting; see s.v. ‘foeditas’ in Lewis and Short, A Latin Dictionary. See also Pliny the Elder, Naturalis Historia 11.33, 39.
86 2 Pet 2.22.
87 Num 11.31ff.
88 Jerome, Ep. 54.4.
89 Jerome, Ep. 117.3.
intumescat, infans vagiat, cruciet paelex, domus cura sollicitet, et omnia quae putantur bona, mors extrema praecidat.

(I am not on this occasion about to sing the praises of virginity which you have pursued and proved to be so good. Nor am I about to make a list of the unpleasant aspects of marriage such as the way the womb becomes distended, the baby cries, the mistress tortures you and the cares of running a household cause distress, and everything which is considered an advantage is cut short by death.)

Although Jerome’s primary target was the senatorial elite, his disparagement of family life was part of a wider discourse, gaining currency, that ties of kinship and obligation have been superseded with the advent of the new family of the Church. This view of the family underpinned the theology of asceticism based on Jesus’ words in the Gospels:

He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left parents or brothers or a wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God and will not receive much more and in the age to come of eternal life”.

This was taken to mean the deliberate abandonment of all ties of affection and respect in the new kingdom of God. Jerome sought to hasten this kingdom by rendering procreation disgusting. But the descriptions are so vivid and detailed that the evidence suggests that Helvidius was right about those who advocated the post-partum and perpetual virginity of Mary, regarding birth as intrinsically turpe.

Cloke identifies the difference in attitude between Augustine and Jerome concerning celibacy within marriage. Augustine censures Edicia’s unilateral decision to live celibately that, he claims, drove her husband into adultery. In addition, she had decided to give away her son’s patrimony. Jerome, on the other hand, absolutises the vow of celibacy. He urges Rusticus, who had failed to keep a vow of continence, to join his wife Artemia, who had fled to Bethlehem after the invasion of Gaul. Jerome highlights the physical dangers of Rusticus’ present life in Gaul that ought to drive him to

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90 Jerome, Ep. 22.2.
91 See Lk 18.29.
92 See 82 above.
93 Cloke, ‘This Female Man of God’, 130; Augustine, Ep. 262.1–2.
Jerome again assumes his apostolic persona: ‘Et Paulus lugebat Corinthios, qui fornicationis maculas lacrimis delere nolabant’ (‘And Paul mourned for the Corinthians who refused to wipe out the marks of their fornication with tears’). Artemia is praised in the highest terms for her steadfastness: ‘Pro pudor! Fragilior sexus vincit saeculum, et robustior superatur a saeculo … “dux femina facti”’ (‘How shameful! The weaker sex has overcome the times, and the stronger person has been overwhelmed by it … “a woman is the leader of the enterprise”’). Yet, the Apostle Paul had made a stronger statement on conjugal rights:

The husband should give to the wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own but the wife does. Do not refuse one another, except perhaps, by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.

Jerome interpolates an imperative from 1 Thess 5.17: ‘pray constantly’, which renders Paul’s words meaningless, as Jerome argues:

cum apostolus sine intermissione orare nos iubeat et, qui in coniugio debitum solvit, orare non possit, aut oramus semper et virgines sumus, aut orare desinimus, ut coniugio serviamus.

(when the Apostle orders us to pray constantly and, the man who is paying his due (to his wife) in marriage is not able to pray, we must either be virgins and pray constantly, or cease to pray so that we may devote ourselves to marriage.)

Jerome overrides the Apostle’s command on the mutuality of sex, intended to prevent the failure of which Rusticus was guilty. For Jerome, vows of celibacy displace any other consideration. Further, Jerome ignores the significant amount of advice in

95 Jerome, Ep. 22.4.
96 Jerome, Ep. 22.3.
97 Ibid. See Virgil, Aen. 1.364.
98 1 Cor 7.3–6.
99 Jerome, Ep. 22.22.
Scripture to women on bringing their husbands to faith in Christ.\textsuperscript{100} He is circumspect in his comments to powerful married women such as Proba, Juliana and even Laeta, but ultimately his works reflect his misogamy.

\textit{Acceptable Married Women}

In his rejection of marriage, Jerome faced certain problems. He held marriage to be inviolate even when presented with the case of a Christian woman whose husband was an adulterer:

\begin{quote}
Odnes igitur causationes Apostolus amputans, apertissime definuit vivente viro adultera erit si duxerit alium virum.
\end{quote}

(The Apostle, therefore, cutting off every pretext, has made abundantly clear that, if a woman marries again while her husband is living, she is an adulteress.)\textsuperscript{101}

Further, some male patrons, such as Pammachius, were married. Jerome must modify his wholly bleak picture of marriage and motherhood. Married women who did receive his approval were far removed from the honoured Roman matrons. Jerome recounts the story of a Christian woman unjustly accused of adultery.\textsuperscript{102} Despite the torture-induced confessions of the alleged lover and her own sufferings at the hands of the executioner, she refuses to confess to a crime of which she is innocent. She represents the new heroine, suffering for her faith in a Christian society.\textsuperscript{103}

Clark stated that only women whose bodies were constrained by torture or exigent living were acceptable to Jerome.\textsuperscript{104} She maintains that the women whom Jerome regarded as his ‘friends’ were ‘described as a transcendence of femaleness, or more bluntly, as an incorporation into “maleness”’ but ‘their passage to the new state remained, therefore, incomplete’.\textsuperscript{105} Yet, Jerome rejects the behaviour of ascetic women who dress as males.\textsuperscript{106} Moreover, as we have seen above, Jerome described himself in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{100} 1 Pet 3.1–3; 1 Cor 7.13–14.
\textsuperscript{101} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 55.3. Jerome refers to 1 Cor 7.35 as the basis for the argument. Labouurt regards this section as a codicil to the main letter in Jérôme Labouurt, ed. \textit{Saint Jérôme: Lettres}, 8 vols (Paris: L’Association Guillaume Budé, 1953), III, 44.
\textsuperscript{102} Rebenich describes this narrative as a novel in Rebenich, Jerome, 63.
\textsuperscript{103} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 1, \textit{passim}.
\textsuperscript{104} See 23 above.
\textsuperscript{105} See Elizabeth A. Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, 56.
\textsuperscript{106} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.27.
\end{flushright}
feminine tropes as the repentant prostitute. He was not suggesting that he must become female in order to be truly repentant.

In a letter to Lucinius, a wealthy Spaniard, who intended travelling to Palestine with his wife, Theodora, Jerome commends the couple’s celibacy:

Habes tecum prius in carne, nunc in Spiritu sociam, de coniuge germanam, de femina virum, de subiecta parem, quae sub eodem iugo ad caelestia simul regna festinet.

(You have with you one who was formerly an ally in the flesh, but is now one in the Spirit; from being a wife she has become a sister, from being a woman she has become a man, from a subject, an equal. Under the same yoke may she hasten in step with you to the heavenly kingdom.)

‘De femina virum’ seems to imply that once Theodora ceased to have union with her husband, she attained male status and was freed from the post-Eden curse. Clark takes this to mean that Jerome ‘applauds this spiritual goal’ of a woman’s transformation into a ‘man’. Further, she regards the idea of transformation as ‘the key to the patristic understanding of friendship between the sexes’. The equality for true friendship has been achieved by perceiving women as men. She seeks to substantiate this neat solution from a *consolatio* to Theodora on Lucinius’ death, where Jerome takes the former conceit even further, apparently confirming Clark’s argument, especially where ‘brother’ is substituted for the previous ‘sister’:

Oblitus officii coniugalis, in terra quoque sororem te habere coeperat, immo fratrem; quia casta coniunctio sexum non habet nuptialem. Et si adhuc in carne positi, et renati in Christo, non sumus “Graecus et Barbarus, servus et liber, masculus et femina, sed omnes in eo unum sumus”, quanto magis cum corruptivum hoc induerit incorruptionem, et mortale induerit immortalitatem.

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107 See 107 above.
110 Gal 3.28.
(Disregarding the claims of marriage, he began to treat you even on earth as a sister, or rather as a brother, since a chaste union does not require the differentiation in sex as a marriage. And even if we are still in the flesh, and we are born again in Christ, we are no longer “Greek and Barbarian, bond and free, male and female, but we are all one in Him”, how much more will this be when this corruptible body has put on incorruption and when this mortality has put on immortality.)\textsuperscript{111}

Clark’s argument aligns Jerome with Gnostic teaching found in the Apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. Simon Peter asks Jesus to send away Mary Magdalene from them, to which Jesus replies:

\begin{quote}
Lo, I will draw her so that I will make her a man, so that she too may become a living spirit which is like you men.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

But Jerome was not a Gnostic, as his theology of the resurrection makes clear in the remainder of the passage cited and his commendation of Lucinius’ resistance of Gnosticism in Spain.\textsuperscript{113} Jerome asserts that women remain women in the resurrection:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

(When the Lord says, “They neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven”, there is no removal of a nature and substance but the greatness of the glory is indicated. For it has not beem written “they shall be angels” but he said “they shall be as the angels”: where likeness to the angels is promised but actuality is denied. “They

\textsuperscript{111} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 75.2; 1 Cor 15.35.
\textsuperscript{113} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 75.3.
shall be”, he says, “as the angels”, that is like the angels; therefore they will not cease to be humankind. Wonderful, indeed, and adorned with angelic splendour, but human nonetheless, so that the Apostle will still be the Apostle, Mary will still be Mary. Let that heresy be confounded which promises great but vague things so that it may dispose of what is restrained yet sure.)\(^{114}\)

Jerome is employing a hyperbolic conceit, expressed in the language of contrasts, for changed relationships, rather than a desire to have women become men. In the Gen 1.27 passage, humanity comprises *masculus* and *femina*, made in the image of God and in a state, in Jerome’s reckoning, of sexual innocence. He never writes of women becoming *masculi*, but he does want them to be restored to the status of *femina*. The Galatians quote refers to the new equality of salvation status enjoyed by God’s people in Christ, though their function may differ:

\[\text{Nec Judaeus idcirco melior est, quia circumcisus est; nec Gentilis ideo deterior, quia praeputium habet; sed pro qualitate fidei, vel Judaeus, vel Graecus melior, sive deterior est. Servus quoque et liber, non conditione separantur, sed fide, quia potest et servus libero esse melior, et liber servum in fidei qualitate praevertere. Masculus similiter et femina, fortitudine et imbecillitate corporum separantur. Caeterum fides pro mentis devotione censetur, et saepe evenit ut et mulier viro causa salutis fiat, et mulierem vir in religione praecedat.}\]

(The Jew is not superior because he is circumcised, nor is the Gentile inferior because he is uncircumcised. Rather, the Jew or Gentile is superior or inferior depending on the quality of his faith. Also, slaves and free men are distinguished by faith and not by social standing, for the slave is able to be superior to the free man, and the latter is able to surpass the former in the quality of his faith. Likewise, men and women are distinguished by their bodily strength and weakness, but faith is measured by devotion of the mind, and it often happens that a woman

\(^{114}\) Jerome, *Ep*. 75.2.
becomes the reason a man is saved and that a man precedes a woman in matters of religion.)

Instead of making women ersatz men, I suggest that Jerome sought to reinstate them to his interpretation of their pre-Fall status of femina. The argument finds support in the way Jerome employs language to designate a woman. In the story of the tortured woman, he begins by referring to her as muliercula. He frequently uses this diminutive in a patronising way. In a letter to Principia eulogising Marcella, he claims that unbelievers will no doubt smirk at his praise ‘muliercularum’ (‘of mere women’).

The woman unjustly martyred grows in status as her suffering makes her more Christ-like. She is described as mulier, when she demonstrates love towards her tormentor in the midst of her torture: “En tibi”, ait mulier, “ex umero aurum ruit” (“Look!” said the woman, “your gold [brooch] is falling from your shoulder”). By the end of the story, when the crowd takes up arms in her defence she becomes femina: ‘Tandem ergo ad feminam vindicandam populus armatur!’ (‘So, at length, the people took up arms to defend the woman’) A similar use of language occurs when Jerome contrasts what the ignorant may say about his association with ‘mere women’ and the reality:

Si recordetur sanctas feminas comites domini salvatoris … se potius superbiae quam nos condemnabit ineptiarum, qui virtutes non sexu sed animo iudicamus.

(If he were to remember the holy women, the comrades of our Lord and Saviour … he will convict himself of arrogance rather than condemn me for folly. I judge virtue not according to sex but according to spirit.)

Jerome takes the moral high ground, placing himself in company with the Lord. And just as the women who associate with the Lord are designated feminae; any women associated with Jerome will be more than mulierculae. A woman who has obtained sanctity is designated by femina, which means ‘woman’ as opposed to vir (‘man’) or sometimes masculus (‘male’). Mulier, and its diminutive muliercula, is usually a

115 Jerome, In Gal. 2.3, 28; translation from Thomas P. Scheck, ed., St Jerome’s Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 152.
116 See Jerome, Ep. 22.16.
117 Jerome, Ep. 127.5. The context suggests a patronising use of the term.
118 Jerome, Ep. 1.7.
120 Jerome, Ep. 127.5.
married woman, as opposed to an unmarried woman or virgin and generally a pejorative term in Jerome’s writing. In short, women may be *feminae* as long as they give up any claim to marriage. Gen 1.27 renders the complementary participants (male and female) in the image of God in bold below:

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The emphasis is now on the sexuality of each person. The distinction between θήλυς and γυνη is evident in the aftermath of the defeat of Midian: ‘καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Μωυσῆς ῞Ινα τί ἐζωγρήσατε πᾶν θῆλυ’ (‘And Moses said to them, “Why have you saved every female alive?”’). Moses continues, ‘καὶ νῦν ἀποκτείνατε πᾶν ἄρσενικὸν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ ἀπαρτίᾳ, καὶ πᾶσαν γυναῖκα, ἥτις ἔγνωκεν κοίτην ἄρσενος, ἀποκτείνατε’ (‘Now then kill every male amidst all the spoil, and execute every woman who has known intercourse with a man’). It is not because each is female that she is put to death, but because she is γυνη. Moses has given the reason for this in the previous verse. The women of Midian had engaged with the Israelite soldiers in the orgiastic rites before Ba’al Pe’or.

A Marriage Made for Heaven

We have seen above that Mary was Eve recapitulated as the perfect femina, made in the image of God, who could be ‘fruitful and multiply’ (because this command preceded the Fall) but also remain ever virgin post-partum. She was married and a mother but never a wife in the sense of mulier. I have accepted Cain’s argument that the Epitaphium to Paula was a bid for her canonisation. In this thesis, Paula also fulfils the requirement of a femina, like the married woman who suffered torture. Bethlehem and the Incarnation were important to Jerome, as his settlement there indicates, not least for the connection with Mary. Jerome’s theological focus on Mary, in addition to its Christological implications, provided a basis for relating to a woman, Paula, on whom he was dependent, both financially and emotionally. The Epitaphium thus serves as a panegyric for her as a chaste Eve, the perfect ‘helper’ of Eden, accommodating herself to Jerome’s ambitions and tastes like the quintessential Roman wife but without consummation of the bond and therefore retaining her own saintly glory. She is represented, the new woman of a new society, as the ‘counter-cultural icon who defied senatorial norms of property succession’.

125 Num 31.15.
126 Ibid.
127 The Hebrew follows the same differentiation of neqēḇāh (female) and ‘išṣā (woman) in Num 31.17. See entries in L. William Holliday, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Based on lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).
128 Gen 2.28.
129 See 48–9 above.
Jerome lived out with Paula the life of a pre-Fall partnership of *masculus et femina*. This is never explicitly stated but that was not surprising in view of his attacks on those who lived together in ‘spiritual marriages’. He marvelled that his exile from Rome should be linked to his relationship with Paula. Yet, he would have criticised other mentors for acting in this way. Paula acted with total abandonment, leaving Rome, friends, family and to some extent reputation in following Jerome, who interprets her actions as following Christ. Kelly’s observation rings true:

> There was a sexual element that we would be naïve to deny; but it would be equally preposterous to infer that either party was aware of it, still less gave overt expression to it.

Had Jerome gone to Jerusalem with Marcella, as Rufinus had gone with Melania the Elder, there would have been no furore, since she was older than Paula. But she maintained the traditional client-patron distance. She was too canny to commit herself to all Jerome’s enterprises, showing no willingness to follow him later. Paula, however, had demonstrated the qualities of a submissive wife, accepting the harshness of Jerome’s rebuke on the death of Blesilla, even though she had hoped for grandchildren:

> Non ut terream loquor, sed, ut mihi testis est Dominus, quasi ante tribunal eius adsistens in haec te verba convenio. Detestendae sunt istae lacrimae plenae sacrilegio, incredulitate plenissimae, quae non habent modum, quae usque ad vicina mortis accedunt. Ululas et exclimatas, et quasi quibusdam facibus accensa, quantum in te est, tui semper homicidas.

(I do not speak to frighten you. The Lord is my witness that I address you now in these words as if standing at the very Judgment Seat. Your tears are abhorrent, laden with blasphemy; resounding with unbelief for they are immoderate, bringing you to the very cusp of death. You wail

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132 For an account of the scandal and charges, see 14–16 above.
and cry out, and as though ignited by burning brands, you do your best to kill yourself.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 39.6.}

However, we have observed above Jerome’s attachment to Paula, demonstrable in the grief expressed in the opening to the letter of consolation to Eustochium with its Homeric \textit{topos}.\footnote{See 48 above; Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 108.1.} Paula is described as virtuous both as a Roman wife and a saint. She had fulfilled her obligations to Toxotius but Jerome imputes to her a desire for celibacy, to be like Eve before the Fall, and therefore worthy of sainthood.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 108.4. Paula bore five children.} In the description of her final separation from Rufina, her daughter, and her young son Toxotius, Jerome does not spare the pathos of the occasion, but Paula remains dry-eyed:

\begin{quote}
Nesciebat matrem, ut Christi probaret ancilliam. Torquebantur viscera, et quasi a suis membris distraherentur, cum dolore pugnabat: in eo cunctis admirabiliior, quod magnam vinceret caritatem. Inter hostium manus e captivitatis duram necessitatem nihil crudelius est, quam parentes et liberis separari. Hoc contra iura naturae plena fides patiebatur.
\end{quote}

(\textit{She did not identify herself as a mother, so that she might prove herself a handmaid of Christ. Yet her insides churned, as if they were drawn out from her body, as she struggled with her grief. In this she was more admirable than in everything, because she had overcome a great Love. In the hands of enemies and the harsh circumstances of captivity, there is nothing crueler than for parents and children to be separated. Contrary to the laws of nature she endured this parting her faith undiminished.})\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 108.6.}

Paula demonstrates here that she is no mere Stoic but lived out the saintly understanding of Macrina, who, on her deathbed, allowed Gregory to give full rein to his grief:

\begin{quote}
And it could also be said that the whole text takes ordinary human grief over bereavement, understandable and permissible, as a paradigm of \textit{desire} – i.e., of fixation on an object: grief that is moulded or attuned to
\end{quote}
mind ought, presumably, to be able to see the other as more than merely the object of my attachment.  

Paula’s actions are depicted as representing the deep suffering, both understandable and permissible, yet that is overcome by her conformity to the love of Christ. Her mind has been so gripped by her understanding of Scripture as to enable her to transcend her pain.

In many ways, Paula emerges as the model poststructuralist woman, written by men. She is the mirror image of Jerome’s ascetic ideal. Surrendering all to follow Christ, an exemplum to those women, condemned by Jerome for their inordinate love of family, she represents the new kingdom relationship where the old ties are now centred on fellow-believers. Loving Christ apparently meant following Jerome to Palestine, though he effaces himself, implying her departure sprung from enthusiasm for the teaching of Paulinus and Epiphanius. In later years, Jerome carefully protects her reputation, representing his own departure as the result of enemy spite for pointing out their faults.

In accordance with Jerome’s tenets, she fasted rigorously, she repudiated Origenism, and she gave extravagantly to the poor. Jerome records this somewhat peevishly at times. Further, unlike women, who adulterate language with affectations of drawl or lisp, Paula speaks Hebrew, a language of the Scriptures, with a perfect accent. An indefatigable student of the Scriptures, she advocates Jerome’s veritas Hebraica. Humble, yet heroic, she forgives her slanderers. Her heroism is accentuated in Jerome’s usual way of honouring women, exemplary of the new Rome, by describing her experiences in Virgilian terms: she is a Julian, ‘a name derived from the Great Iulos’ (‘Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo’). Her journey to her new homeland in the

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140 See 24–7 above.

141 Jerome, Ep. 108.6.

142 Jerome, Ep. 130.19.


144 Jerome, Ep. 108.10 and especially, 108.15.

145 Jerome, Ep. 108.27

146 Ibid.

147 Jerome, Ep. 108.15, 1 respectively.

East is described in terms of Aeneas’ voyage. Jerome is again casting himself as a Virgil, the narrator of new Christian future for the Roman people.

Yet, that is not the complete picture. Paula’s own agency is evident. She showed tenacity in setting out with Eustochium and her entourage to fulfil her ideal. Whether this tenacity sprang from an infatuation with Jerome or her belief that he had the ‘words of salvation’ is unclear, for Jerome was a master in creating anxiety in the soul. She controlled the itinerary, visiting the places where she had aspired to worship and being greeted by the great ones of the Church, doubtlessly contacted beforehand. Jerome needed money for manuscripts but Paula provided so lavishly for the poor that the monasteries faced severe financial difficulties on her death. Jerome extolls this liberality and thereby reveals that Paula is clearly in control of the disbursement of her money. Moreover, her organisation of the monastery was that of an aristocratic Christian household, apart from the upper-class virgins doing manual work and everyone eating together, it was ruled with a firm hand. Thus, Paula acted in accordance with her class in dispersal of her money, her understanding of social organisation and even her concern for the gloria of Eustochium, whom she encouraged in rigorous study by adopting Jerome’s lectio divina. As Laurence suggests:

> Aux yeux de Jérôme, Paula n’est probablement pas si éloignée de Cornelia, elle qui guida sa fille Eustochium dans une voie non moins glorieuse que celle où marchèrent Tiberius et Caius Gracchus, ses ancêtres.

For both Paula and Jerome, Rome’s social institutions of patronage and its associated wealth dispersal, marriage relationships, social organisation and hierarchies provided their norms even when they were challenging them or reframing them.

Jerome’s confrontation with the Origenists emphasises his intention to demonstrate that he and Paula lived in an Eden-like relationship, foreshadowing the resurrection. Paula, under attack, unlike Eve, who failed to call on Adam, calls upon Jerome to answer the

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Origenist who is described in Genesian terms as ‘serpent’ and who poses questions to undermine her faith, as the serpent in Eden did to Eve. Jerome asks him whether a person will rise from the dead in the same sex or in another:

Ad interrogata reticenti, et instar colubri huc atque illuc transflerenti caput, ne feriretur; “quia”, inquam, “taces, ego mihi pro te respondebo, et consequentia inferam. Si non resurgit mulier neque masculus, non erit resurrectio mortuorum; quia sexus membra habet, membra totum corpus efficiunt. Si autem sexus et membra non fuerint, ubi erit resurrectio corporum, quae sine sexu non constat et membris?” Porro si corporum non fuerit resurrectio, nequaquam erit resurrectio mortuorum, Sed et illud quod de nuptiis obicies: Si eadem membra fuerint, sequi nuptias; a Salvatore dissoluitur: “Erratis nescientes Scripturas, neque virtutem Dei; in resurrectione enim mortuorum, non nubet neque nubentur, sed erunt similes angelorum.” Ubi dicitur non nubent neque nubentur, sexum diversitas demonstratur. Nemo enim de lapide et ligne dicit, non nubent neque nubentur, quae naturam nubendi non habent: sed de his qui possint nubere, et Christi gratia ac virtute non nubant.

(On being questioned he fell silent and moved his head to and fro just like the serpent does to avoid being struck. “Since”, I added, “you are silent, I will answer for you and draw the necessary conclusions. If they do not rise again as woman and man, there will be no resurrection of the dead. For each sex has distinct members and the members make up a complete body”. But if there is no sex and no members wherein will be the resurrection of the body, which cannot exist without sex and members? Further, if there is no resurrection of the body, neither can there be a resurrection of the dead. But as for your objection pertaining to marriage, that, if the members remain the same, marriage must follow; this is dealt with by the Saviour: “You err not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection of the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels.” When it is said that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, the distinction of sex is demonstrated. For no one says of a stick or a stone, which do not have

156 Gen 3.4; Jerome, Ep. 108.23.
the capability for marriage, that they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but it refers to those who have the capacity for marriage yet by the grace and virtue of Christ do not do so.)

In the use of *mulier* and *masculus*, Jerome is indicating that humans retain their gender identity in the resurrection. A degree of continuum with earthly life is evident. Jerome’s understanding of ‘living as the angels’ did not involve incorporeality. He may have been distancing himself from Origen, caricaturing Origen’s position as spiritualising the event. Mark Scott provides a lucid account of Origen’s theology, claiming Origen ‘argued both continuity and discontinuity’ for the body. He had reacted against some Alexandrine Christians who saw the resurrection in terms of a gross extension of this life.

This long dissertation is not the only part of Origen’s theology that Jerome claimed to reject but its inclusion here appears deliberate. It takes place in Bethlehem, where Jerome and Paula had settled and where Paula had her vision of the Nativity in which, not only Mary, but Joseph also figured. In Jerome’s theology that Mary was ever a virgin, she and Joseph represent the first triumph over sex and procreation and a presaging of the resurrection. As Joseph and Mary lived in a ‘holy’ relationship providing a family for Jesus, so Jerome insinuates himself and Paula into the picture. Thus, their relationship might be viewed as that of Joseph and Mary, where the femaleness of the woman is not denied. She is *femina*: Eve regained. Jerome found in Paula the Eden helper who tolerated his irascibility, identified with his causes and gave him the loyalty that his closest male friend, Rufinus, had denied him. That others saw their relationship in this light is demonstrated by the unflattering words of one who had no love for Jerome:

The lady Paula, who looks after him, will die first and will be set free at last from his meanness. [For] because of him no holy person will live in those parts. His bad temper would drive out even his own brother.

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158 See Mark S. M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: OUP, 2012). Origen argued for a bodily resurrection on the basis of 1 Cor 15. Souls need bodies in their progression and differentiation, 122, but he implies incorporeality at *apokatastasis*, 125.
159 Origen had written his *Contra Celsum* to address this group’s ridiculing of resurrection.
Conclusion

Jerome presented asceticism as a discourse for the elite that harmonised with ideas of ancient philosophy as a spiritual practice. He advocated a world where men and women, freed from the distractions of sex, served God; where money was disbursed to the poor and the scholarly, and where the old, arrogant ambitions were inverted to express humility and the power of Christ. He relished the persona of the forensic rhetorician, employing the skills he so ardently pursued in his youth.\textsuperscript{162}

Jerome drew on the reserves of misogynistic satire already available in the rhetorical tradition in ridiculing women and the idea that marriage was beneficial.\textsuperscript{163} It indulged his taste for classical literature, since it was employed for the purposes of God. Yet, his satire was driven by a sincere belief that married women represented a threat to Christian salvation. For Jerome, the sure hope of the heavenly crown resided in the celibate body. By impugning married women, he sought to free women from a husband’s dominion and reproduction. Mary, as the new Eve, was both fruitful and virgin and stood as a model for the new woman of Jerome’s world. Jerome tried to replicate, not altogether successfully, an Eden-like, loving relationship between a man and woman, modelled on Joseph and Mary, where Paula represented Mary/Eve, the perfect \textit{femina}. The logical outcome of Jerome’s insistence on celibacy was the reduction of the population, the preparation of Christians for heaven and an ushering in of the return of the Christ.

Jerome did not want to make women into men. The putative moral and physical frailty of women was a necessary \textit{topos} to throw into contrast the self-control of celibate women, and testified to the power of Christ to provoke admiration from the pagans. Celibate women were a rebuke to male arrogance. They demonstrated how women, when they rejected a gender-based destiny, could appropriate the qualities prized by men. Nevertheless, celibacy was a call to all humanity.

\textsuperscript{162} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 84.2.
\textsuperscript{163} See 92 above.
Chapter 6: Scholarly Widows

Like Pliny, Jerome regarded the noble widows of Rome as a means of shoring up his reputation after a questionable past and to improve his status in contemporary society. In his correspondence with widows, he assumes the authority of a quasi-bishop though he has no see. In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to show how Jerome, by exalting virgins and using satire to discredit married women and mothers, sought to reverse the order of Pliny’s *cursus honorum* for women, in his vision to restructure the *nobilitas* of Roman society. In Jerome’s ideal world, wealth that had previously been accumulated through advantageous marriages would no longer be employed for the honour of inscribed public benefactions such as public baths, monuments and guilds, but would be diverted to the relief of the poor, especially the scholarly poor.

Dedicated virginity, formerly known only in the Vestal Virgin, was to be a living testimony to the power of the Gospel and virgins were designated the new heroes of Rome. Vestal Virgins differed in that they might marry after their term of service keeping the flame in the Temple of Vesta. Marriage, family and both civic life and religion came together in the cult of Vesta, so they stood for the antithesis of what Jerome promulgated. However, their intactness symbolised the safety of the State: hence the extreme nature of punishment for breaking their vows. Christian virgins, as we have seen above, reflected the safety of the Church.

But how might widows be written into this new heroic order, since celibate widows already had great status and independence in Roman society? Jerome promoted a theology of widowhood and its rewards that, while departing from New Testament injunctions, appealed to the sense of superiority in the Roman senatorial class. Thus these women shaped what Jerome must include in his letters; namely material that spelled out their special place in the resurrection and at the same time satisfied their intellectual and spiritual aspirations. Yet, even though Jerome ranked the widow below the virgin in the heavenly hierarchy, in his own personal hierarchy of affections,

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1 See 47ff. above.
2 See 207ff. below.
5 See 89ff. above.
widows ranked highest, not least because of their maturity, and pursuit of scholarship that lacked the competitive edge of their male counterparts.

Jerome’s involuntary departure from Rome had caused a crisis in his spiritual authority and access to patronage. On his arrival in Bethlehem, he sought to re-establish his reputation and income, by once more appealing to a range of devout and erudite women through his persona of the learned desert recluse. He was, however, unsuccessful in attracting his former patrons to join him in the Holy Land. Yet, Jerome’s ‘labour’ in this new setting ‘required an expensive infrastructure: a library, a workplace’. He would seek to initiate new contacts with widows, eventually beyond the city of Rome. These activities were influenced by the almost constant threat of barbarian invasion.

As we have seen above, his strategy had always been to replace the authority of the principal male relative with his own, but he lacked the social rank to be more than a client, except in the case of Paula. I propose that he desired genuine friendship with his patrons, particularly Marcella, his principal correspondent, partly because he was disappointed in his male friendships. However, he would also be discouraged in this bid for friendship with her. Aristocratic custom would reassert itself and he would be kept at a distance. The Christian virtue of agape was present among the nobilitas in discretionary giving of gifts to the poor, but not in the levelling of all social structures. Although noble, pious widows would shape the Christian discourse of the West in ascetic terms, they maintained a patrician sense of social order, accepting what was in their own interest but contextualising Christianity into the old hierarchical patterns.

As Jerome’s financial needs grew with the volume of his scholarship and the costs of the monasteries, his attention turned to Constantinople and the provinces, especially Gaul. He had not lost hope in a new social order, but now it would extend beyond the city of Rome. However, Jerome’s capacity to make enemies was undiminished. He became embroiled in the Origenist and Pelagian controversies and his asceticism was attacked by Vigilantus. To ensure continued political and financial protection, and to deal with the disparity in rank that had vexed his relationships in the past, he would

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7 See 140ff., 195ff. above.
8 See 5 above.
10 I have attempted to demonstrate this in Jerome’s relationship with the Aniciae in Ch. 4.
supplement the persona of the holy man, lost in his studies of Scripture into that of a quasi-bishop pastorally concerned for widows.

In writing to widows, Jerome was also driven by social constraints and circumstances to redevelop his identity, and to shape his writing around their concerns. We see this in Marcella’s insistent demands for answers, in his awkward, unsolicited *consolatio* for Salvina, and the treatises on celibacy to young widows such as Furia and Ageruchia.

**Jerome and the Widows – a Mutually Beneficial Relationship**

Jerome seemed most at ease in his dealings with widows. They were the major recipients of his correspondence to women.\(^{11}\) His relationship with them was, nevertheless, complex. There is much that is self-serving and exploitive in his correspondence. Yet, it would be unjust to suggest that Jerome’s affection for widows was based entirely on their ready cash to finance his enterprise.\(^{12}\) In my thesis, widows had the most to gain from their association with Jerome. He publicly honoured their scholarly aspirations in the dedication of his commentaries.\(^{13}\) And as the Empire was assailed by barbarians, only the pastoral counsel of the certainties of Christ’s kingdom could offer any comfort. Their agency is recognisable in their loyal support, suggesting discernment of his ability, despite his personal and scholarly unpopularity.

Paradoxically, he also promised that these women would not be casting aside their considerable status in Roman society, by promulgating a complex theology of the rewards for celibate widowhood and diminishing, once again through satire, any aspiration for remarriage.\(^{14}\) In this way, he offered the prospect of an even more exalted status in the new society he was advocating. Learned widows, as I argue below, could acquire a status akin to that of a philosopher, an unsurpassed freedom of mobility through the tradition of pilgrimage, independence and a reputation in their own right that would last beyond their lifetimes.\(^ {15}\) This reputation lay in the dedication of his

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11 Over ninety percent were written to widows; the bulk written to Marcella.
13 Most commentaries are dedicated to Paula (and Eustochium) and Marcella.
14 For the strategy to promote elitism, see 92ff. and 177ff.
15 Clark discounts the depiction of women as ‘philosophers’, regarding it as an example of ‘men writing women’ to their own ends in Elizabeth A. Clark, “‘Holy Women, Holy Words’: Early Christian Women, Social History and the ‘Linguistic Turn’,” *JECS* 6, no. 3 (1998), 423. This again discounts female agency. The women she describes – Melania the Younger, Marcella and Macrina – are all depicted to different ends: Macrina is engaged in a philosophical debate; Melania denounces Nestorius, while Jerome’s women received philosophical treatises in the commentaries dedicated to them.
commentaries, particularly to Paula, Eustochium and Marcella. We have seen that Jerome was indebted to Origen in his construction of his commentaries and that they fulfilled the ancient requirements of philosophical texts.\textsuperscript{16}

Even the putative sacrifices that the women were called upon to make are subject to qualification.\textsuperscript{17} Kate Cooper describes Fabiola and Melania as ‘butterflies’, who, when they ran out of money, enrolled as ‘widows’ in the Church at Jerusalem to receive support, until their next remittance arrived from Rome.\textsuperscript{18} Both exhibited the old Roman virtue of \textit{frugalitas} much admired by Pliny.\textsuperscript{19} Jerome’s widows had the best of both worlds, I suggest: honour and status for their study and piety, and a certain hope of reward at the return of Christ.

\textbf{The Appeal of an Elite}

Pliny had written, with particular reference to widows who protected their husbands’ glory: ‘\textit{tametsi quid homini potest dari maius quam gloria et laus et aeternitas}’ (‘however, what greater thing can be given to mankind than glory and praise and immortality’).\textsuperscript{20} Glory was at the very core of the understanding of self for members of the \textit{nobiiitas}.\textsuperscript{21} I have already discussed how Pliny had extolled widows who promoted the memory of their husbands.\textsuperscript{22} Jerome reinterpreted this glory by focusing on the woman’s self-discipline and self-cultivation in her commitment to Christ. However, Jerome would also appeal to the glory of celibacy in the past, shaming the young widow, Furia to reject remarriage:

\begin{quote}
Habes praeterea generis tui grande privilegium, quod exinde a Camillo vel nulla vel rara vestrae familiae scribitur secundos nosse concubitus, ut non tam laudanda sis, si vidua perseveres, quam execranda, si id Christiana non serves, quod per tanta saecula gentiles feminae custodierunt.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} See 138ff. and 175ff. above.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Pace}, Clark. Marcella retained her mansion in Rome and supported a community on a country estate (Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 127.8). See also Demetrias, 165–7 above.
\textsuperscript{19} See 64 above.
\textsuperscript{20} Pliny, \textit{Ep.} 3.21.6.
\textsuperscript{21} See Peter Brown, “The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West,” \textit{JTS} 21, no. 1 (1970): 96. Brown indicates that many senators were frivolous but groups like Jerome’s Christian senate and the avowedly pagan sought to set themselves apart.
\textsuperscript{22} See 63–4 above.
(Meanwhile, you have a great privilege from your family line, where no woman, from the time of Camillus, is recorded, either as never or rarely undergoing a second marriage. Thus you ought not to be praised so much for continuing as a widow, as vilified if you, a Christian, were not to preserve what pagan women over so many centuries defended.)

Jerome did more than simply shame widows into asceticism. Frances Young points out that ‘popular’ Christianity required a ‘surprising level of intellectual understanding … of even illiterate people’, yet in the mid-fourth century, ‘the Church still claimed to be a comprehensive, not an elitist school’. The Church extended to women the right to study the Scriptures as part of its comprehensive inclusiveness. Jerome, however, I suggest, turned this inclusiveness into an elite activity through his promotion of studying the source texts of the Scriptures and through his complex defence of asceticism, based on the interpretation of the allegory of the virgin. Young describes this elitist change that came about in the fourth century, evident in the commentaries and letters that Jerome sent to women:

The idea of secrecy or a reserve of an elite who were in the know because they have passed through an initiation rite, becomes much more obvious in the language of liturgy and doctrine in the fourth century.

A New Persona Emerges from the Disappointment

Jerome’s hopes in Fabiola were unrealised. Pammachius and Marcella were firmly entrenched in Rome. By the end of the fourth century, Paula’s money was running out and her death was imminent. Although Jerome never lost his desire to see the transformation of society by the ‘better’ people, Rome seemed far away. Confronted by the increasing threat of barbarian invasion from the Visigoths, Vandals and Huns, the need of transformation was even more urgent. He told Heliodorus that ‘Romanus orbis ruit’ (‘the Roman world is collapsing’), cataloguing the ruinous wars in which Rome had been engaged. Despite his criticism of Roman society, Jerome remained a Roman at heart. Though the city may suffer, there was hope that the provinces might be

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23 Jerome, Ep. 54.1.
25 Ibid., 469.
26 Jerome, Ep. 108.1.
27 Jerome, Ep. 60.16.
changed; but his conflict with John of Jerusalem over both Origenism and Pelagius rendered even Bethlehem precarious.28

Jerome began to initiate correspondence with widows elsewhere, and to fashion an episcopal-like persona. Jerome had once declared that he was unwilling to become involved with bishops.29 Pope Siricus and John of Jerusalem had proved to be enemies and even his relations with Augustine were initially frosty. On the other hand, Jerome claimed Damasus as a patron and was on good terms with Theophilus of Alexandria. Further, he claimed that he was once spoken of as a potential candidate for the See of Rome.30

In his commentary on Titus, Jerome proposes that there was no real distinction between priests and bishops but that the convention arose to avoid schism.31 In responding to Paulinus’ request for guidance on the calling of a monk, Jerome again makes little distinction between presbyters and bishops:

Si officium vis exercere presbyteri, si episcopatus te vel opus vel honos forte delectat, vive in urribus et castellis … episcopi et presbyteri habeant in exemplum apostolos et apostolicos viros, quorum honorem possidentes habere nitantur et meritum. Nos autem habemus propositi nostri principes Paulos, Antonios, Iulianos, Hilariones, Macarios.

(If you wish to carry out the task of a presbyter, and should either the task or position accorded to a bishop draw you, live in a city or a walled town … let bishops and presbyters take as their models the apostles and men of the apostolic succession, and in obtaining the prestige of those who held it, may they also exhibit the worthiness. Yet we [monks] have as our guides men like Paul, Antony, Julian, Hilarion and the Macarii.)32

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28 See 19–20 above; Ch. 4.
29 Jerome, Ep. 105.4.
30 Jerome, Ep. 45.3. For the credibility of this claim see 12 n.88 above.
31 Scheck, St Jerome’s Commentaries, 289. Jerome makes little differentiation between presbyters and bishops in his letter to Evangelus: Jerome, Ep. 146. Ambrosiaster regarded bishops and priests as being of the same ordo in Ambrosiaster, Quaestiones 101.5 and Comm. 1 Tim 3.8–10, but he also held a strongly hierarchical view of the contemporary Church. See Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe, Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 127.
32 Jerome, Ep. 58.5.
In this context, Jerome is encoding competition between priests/bishops and monks by eliding the difference between presbyters and bishops in the process. What he actually argues for in this letter is a totally ascetic clergy.  

The bishop John Chrysostom similarly played down the differences between a presbyter and a bishop, asserting that the differences were not great and lay primarily in the latter’s authority to ordain. It seems that in the fourth century the office of bishop had not yet become as inflexibly hierarchical as it would a century later. Nevertheless, there were intimations that bishops guarded their role of teaching and theological pronouncement jealously. For instance, following Jerome’s death, Augustine had to justify Jerome’s inclusion as an authority, though a mere presbyter and not a bishop, in *Contra Iulianum*.  

From his Scriptural exegesis, it would not be difficult for Jerome to regard his ordination as priest as conferring sufficient spiritual authority on him to exercise the theologically directive and pastoral role of a bishop that he witnessed in his translation of the letters of Theophilus of Alexandria. Jerome, as the learnedness and propaganda of his letters indicate, wished to be known as a pre-eminent biblical scholar and defender of orthodoxy and not simply as a holy man of the ‘desert’.  

Jerome’s perception of himself as one with certain prerogatives is evident even in the letter to Eustochium: ‘Desponsavi enim vos uni viro, virginem castam exhibere Christo’ (‘I have betrothed you all to one husband, a chaste virgin to present to Christ’). Hunter argues that Ambrose saw the veiling of virgins, the presenting of them to Christ, as enhancing his authority, since he became *paterfamilias* to them all. Jerome arrogates to himself an episcopal-like authority ‘marrying’ Eustochium to Christ in the language of Psalm 45 and the *Song of Songs*, also used by Ambrose.

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35 See Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*. 1.34 Augustine sounds defensive: ‘quibus addo presbyterum, velis, nolis, Hieronymum’ (‘to whom I add the presbyter, Jerome, whether you like it or not’).
36 See Jerome, *Epp.* 96, 98, which commend fasting and penance for sinners; and 100, which condemns Origenism in Theophilus’ diatribe against John Chrysostom.
39 Ibid.
If Jerome believed that a bishop was no more than the chief presbyter in a city, why did he seek to take on the role, if not the title? Cain points out that Jerome’s ‘ecclesiastical status was ambiguous’. His ordination by the schismatic bishop Paulinianus was tainted. He had left Rome in disgrace and had been excommunicated by John of Jerusalem. He sought to confirm his legitimacy by self-promotion through his letters. The assumption of an episcopal-like authority enabled him to deal with the widows of the Empire, where the imbalance of rank was less marked than it was among the nobilitas of Rome. Jerome assumed responsibility for their pastoral care. Not only could he respond authoritatively to their letters, he could also take the initiative in writing to them, as in the case of Salvina and the widows of Gaul.

His initial foray in creating this role of the de facto overseer of celibate widows was to commend Theodora, the widow of the wealthy Spaniard, Lucinius, mentioned above, to the care of Abigaus, a blind presbyter from Baetica. Jerome intervenes as a paterfamilias, arranging Theodora’s future. Similarly he commends Furia to the pastoral care of the priest, Exuperius. Jerome acts as a bishop, who knows his priests, sympathetic to ascetism and commends his flock to them.

Jerome penned an ambitious consolatio to the lady Salvina, on the death of her husband Nebridius, a prominent member of the imperial family in Constantinople. His introduction is awkward. He begins by countering the accusations of self-seeking that might be levelled at him for writing to her, offering a specious excuse:

Cur ergo ad eam scribimus, quam ignoramus? … Prima, quia pro officio sacerdotii omnes Christianos filiorum loco diligimus, et prefectus eorum nostra est gloria.

(But why do I write to a woman whom I do not know? … First, as the duty of a priest, I love all Christians as my children and their development is my glory.)

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40 Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 171.
41 See 8 above.
42 Cain, The Letters of Jerome, 141.
43 Because of convention, he could not take this initiative with dedicated virgins or married women.
44 Jerome, Ep. 76.3.
45 Jerome, Ep. 4.11.
47 Jerome, Ep. 79.1.
Jerome rarely acknowledges his status as a priest, but here it presents him with the *entrée* of pastoral concern. He goes on:

> Vereor ne officium putetur ambitio; et quod illius exemplo facimus, qui ait: “Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humiliscorde”, gloriae facere adpetitione dicamur, et non viduam adloqui, et in angustia constitutam, sed aulae nos insinuare regali; et sub occasione sermonis, amicitias potentium quaerere.

(I fear my responsibility will be perceived as self-seeking; and yet I am following the example of the one who said: “learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart.”)\(^{48}\) I will be alluded to as acting out of an appetite for self-promotion, and that I am not really giving attention to a widow afflicted by grief but insinuating myself into the imperial court, and under the guise of consolation, I am seeking the friendship of the powerful.)\(^{49}\)

Jerome’s use of ‘officium’ implies a duty or responsibility that is bound up with his role as a priest. It may also hint at an authority that exceeds that role, as Jerome speaks ‘multorum … ad quos ante super eadem materia scripsam’ (‘of the many … to whom I had previously written on this same subject’).\(^{50}\) Both the work to Furia and this letter to Salvina will be later cited as part of his *bibliotheca ascetica* for widows.\(^{51}\) In setting forth his expertise, pastorally and scripturally, Jerome casts himself as *paterfamilias*/*bishop* to all well-born widows. As Pliny made available his forensic skills for certain women, so Jerome places his expertise as ascetic mentor and pastor to them.\(^{52}\)

Despite his protestations, the letter does sound like a bid for patronage, especially as the opening paragraphs assures Salvina that, as her husband has demonstrated, being rich does not preclude one from the Kingdom of Heaven, provided one is charitable.\(^{53}\) A further example of patron-pleasing occurs. Jerome, who is generally disparaging of parental affection for children, describes Salvina’s children, whom he has never seen

\(^{48}\) Mt 11.29.  
\(^{49}\) Ibid.  
\(^{50}\) Jerome, *Ep.* 123.1.  
\(^{52}\) See 56–7 above.  
\(^{53}\) This echoes Jerome’s advice to Demetrias. See Jerome, *Ep.* 130.14.
and may have found repellent, as the darlings of the imperial court. Yet the general tone of the letter is unrelievedly didactic in accordance with the persona he has adopted.

Had the ploy been successful, Jerome would have cemented his role as ‘bishop’ to widows and gained a wealthy supporter. Not surprisingly, in view of its tone, the bid came to nothing. But the very existence of the letter formed part of his authoritative ascetic and pastoral arsenal in his contact with others and as Jerome had said to the Aniciae, ‘the book remains’. Salvina’s agency is obvious. Jerome found it difficult to strike the right note when dealing with the truly great, as we have seen in his awkwardness with the Aniciae. Furthermore, the tone, effective in Rome, brought no response from Constantinople.

**The Widow’s Reward**

Jerome was obliged to present a coherent Scriptural basis for his advocacy of the superior nature of celibate widowhood. While the role of widows within the Church had been a cause for concern almost from the inception of the Christian movement, Jerome would reformulate the original intentions in line with his own ascetic agenda. In the Pastoral Epistles, widows are deemed to be the responsibility of their families. This text allows widows over the age of sixty who had no other means of support to be ‘enrolled’ by the Church provided that they had no one else to care for them. They were required to have a proven record of ‘doing good in every way’. They were to continue these good works in some organised way in return for the support of other Christians. The teaching about widows in 1 Timothy seems primarily concerned with the welfare of a group of women notoriously vulnerable in the ancient world. However, no spiritual superiority on the part of the group is suggested, because membership is only available to the indigent. Further, the description of the activities of the group implies that they are more appropriately carried out by women over the age of sixty. The recommendation concerning young women is, ‘I would have younger women marry, bear children, rule their households, and give the enemy no occasion to revile

56 See 128 above.
57 1 Tim 4.8, 16.
58 1 Tim 4.9.
59 1 Tim 4.10.
us’.\textsuperscript{60} So, whereas 1 Timothy urges the remarriage of young widows, Jerome warns Furia that remarriage is just short of prostitution:

Nulla idcirco ducit maritum, ut cum marito non dormiat. Aut si certe libido non stimulat, quae tanta insania est in more scortorum prostitutere castitatem, ut augeantur diuittiae, et propter rem vilem atque perituram pudicitia, quae et pretiosa et aeterna est, polluatur.

(No woman marries a husband but to sleep with him. So if, indeed, it is not lust that drives you, how great is the madness to prostitute, like a whore, your chastity so that your wealth will increase and in exchange for a paltry and ephemeral profit that purity, which is priceless and eternal, is polluted.)\textsuperscript{61}

Jerome creates a Scriptural text for widows telling the story of celibate widows such as Naomi, who was consoled for the loss of her husband and children but glosses over any mention of Ruth, her widowed daughter-in-law, who remarried and is listed in the genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew as an ancestor of Jesus.\textsuperscript{62} He dismisses her with the pejorative term, \textit{Moabitidem} (the Moabite woman). He concludes the letter with the solemn warning, ‘cogita te cotidie esse morituram, et numquam de secundis nuptiis cogitabis’ (‘consider every day that you will die, and you will never even think of a second marriage’).\textsuperscript{63} Jerome’s view is summed up for Marcella: ‘Vidua, quae soluta est vinculo maritali, nihil necesse habet nisi perseverare’ (‘A widow, who is set free from the bonds of matrimony has no other duty laid upon her but to remain a widow’).\textsuperscript{64}

For the widows of the nobility, Jerome built a theology around the New Testament motif of the crown, making it the great reward for the celibate life and appealing to a sense of superior devotion. Jerome claims to be responding to Furia’s request to tell her ‘quomodo vivere debeas et viduitatis coronam inlaeso pudicitiae nomine conservare’ (‘how you ought to live preserving your crown of widowhood in the undefiled name of chastity’).\textsuperscript{65} While Jerome narrows the application of the metaphor of the crown to

\textsuperscript{60} 1 Tim 4.14.
\textsuperscript{61} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 54.15. See also \textit{Ep.} 123.7.
\textsuperscript{62} Mt 1.5.
\textsuperscript{63} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 54.18.
\textsuperscript{64} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 38.3.
\textsuperscript{65} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 54.1.
celibacy, the Apostle Paul’s use suggests a much wider application of reward for faithfulness and perseverance:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on the Day and not only to me but also to all who love his appearing.66

At one level, Jerome is teaching that only by sexual renunciation could the ‘good fight’ be fought and ‘the race finished’ and the Crown awarded, in short ‘the flesh’ conquered. As Peter Brown notes:

In his exegesis of the Apostle [Paul], he contributed more heavily than did any other contemporary Latin writer to the definitive sexualization of Paul’s notion of the flesh.67

I suggest that, once more, Jerome is equating asceticism with martyrdom as in The Revelation to St John: ‘Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.’68 This equation of martyrdom with asceticism is a recurring theme. Asceticism in its rigorous disciplining of the body is akin to the ‘violence’ experienced in the martyr’s suffering. In the letter to Eustochium, Jerome’s memory and dream involved violence done to his body, as he established his likeness to Christ, his credentials as a holy man and the resolution of desire.69 Mentioned above also is Demetrias’ dedication as a virgin and imagined violence at the hands of the Visigoths: both incidents are incorporated into the experience of the young virgin martyr, Agnes.70 Paula’s extreme self-denial makes her a candidate for martyrdom/sainthood.71

We have seen above that Jerome favoured the use of the hundredfold and sixtyfold yield, taken from the Parable of the Sower, for expounding the hierarchy of celibacy.72 He takes up the metaphor in his *consolatio* to Pammachius, Paula’s son-in-law, on the death of Paulina:

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66 2 Tim 4.7–8. See also James 1.12.
68 Rev 2.7.
69 See 113ff. above.
70 See 133–6 above.
72 See 101 above; Jerome, *Epp.* 49.2; 22.15 and Mk 4; Mt 13; Lk 8.
In agro terrae bonae tres fructus legimus, centesimum, sexagesimum et tricesimum; in tribus mulieribus et sanguine et virtute coniunctis tria Christi praemia recognosco. Eustochoum virginitatis flores metit, Paula laboriosam viduitatis aream terit, Paulina castum matrimonii cubile conservat.

(In the field with the fertile soil we read of three yields, a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. In three women united both by blood and by virtue I distinguish Christ’s three separate rewards. Eustochium gathers the flowers of virginity, Paula laboriously pounds the threshing floor of widowhood and Paulina keeps “the marriage bed undefiled”.73)74

Jerome has little to say about Paulina in the letter. Ironically, hers is the only Scriptural ascription.75 Jerome imputes a desire for celibacy to married women who are patrons.76 I have discussed in the previous chapter Jerome’s use of mulier to designate women who are married or seek to be married.77 Mulier rather than femina is used here because the status of the three women is quite different: only two of them are celibate, while Paulina in her efforts to bear a child is still under the curse of Eve.78 This is spelled out in the way the women’s virtue is described. Eustochium, the virgin, gathers flowers. For the true virgin this means study of the Scriptures, since Jerome used the same metaphor of his exegesis.79 Paula must labour because her widowhood indicates sexual experience and therefore she faces greater temptation. Paulina simply kept out of trouble and fitted in with her husband’s desire for an heir. Jerome seems reluctant to give her a reward for being a chaste wife, providing the rider that she looked forward to sexual renunciation and so desired the second crown.

Another floral motif is taken up in Jerome’s ascetic schemata, where the widow’s crown is woven into Christ’s symbolic new floral crown that replaced the crown of thorns.80 Thus Furia is urged to ‘suscipe, viduas, quas inter virginum lilia et martyrum rosas quasi quasdam violas misceas’ (‘support widows whom you may mix like violets

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73 Heb 13.4.
74 Jerome, Ep. 66.2.
75 Jerome, Ep. 66.3; Heb 13.4.
77 See 192–4 above.
78 Jerome, Ep. 22.18.
79 Jerome, Ep. 130.9. ‘A gathering of flowers’ = an anthology of Scripture.
80 Jerome, Ep. 54.1.
amongst the lilies of virgins and the roses of martyrs’).

There is no mention in the New Testament of the floral crown replacing the crown of thorns. Asceticism becomes the hallmark of the true Christian, the one who perseveres to the end and whose heart is unseduced by the cares of this world. The virgin and the celibate widow, as part of the transformed crown, are participants in Christ’s death and restored to the pre-Fall condition of femina.

Thus Jerome, in his theology of widows and reward, tapped into the desire of the aristocracy to be deemed superior to others of their rank. In addition to offering a sure path of salvation, Jerome again reinforced the sense of superiority of the dedicated widow by employing satire. Jerome’s letters to widows share an emphasis on scholarship supporting this thesis’ understanding that women’s agency affected the choice of genre.

**Jerome’s Widows: Supporters and Scholars**

**Furia – a Young Widow**

When Jerome called for a holy arrogance from Eustochium, he was redrawing the lines of a newly defined pars melior for women of the nobilitas. His letter to Furia became his handbook for young widows, as his letter to Eustochium was designed for consecrated virgins and both are similar in content and style.

Written about 394, nine years after his departure from Rome, the contents of Letter 54 highlight Jerome’s dependence on rich widows but also the promise, always implicit in his letters, of peerless guidance to a life of Christian perfection and access to extraordinary erudition. Jerome embarks on a tour de force of erudition in order to ridicule Furia’s father’s desire for an heir. He points to Cicero and the Gracchi as examples of the reality that children do not necessarily inherit the qualities of their parents.

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82 Jerome, *Ep.* 22.16. See the discussion of satire as a rhetorical device, 176ff. above.
84 For dating, see Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 287.
86 Ibid.
He pillories the motives of interested parties in remarriage – the head of the family, the servants, even the woman herself – might have for desiring a second marriage, by means of a series of satirical sketches:

Scribuntur tibi nunc sponsales tabulae, ut post paululum testamentum facere compellaris. Simulabitur mariti infirmitas et, quod te morituram facere volet, ipse victurus faciet. Aut si evenierit, ut de secundo marito habeas filios, domestica pugna, intestinum proelium. Non licebit tibi amare liberos nec aequis aspicere oculis, quos genuisti. Clam porriges cibos, invidebit mortuoj, et nisi oderis filios, adhuc eorum amare videberis patrem. Quodsi de priori uxore habens sobolem te domum introduserit, etiam si clementissima fueris, omnes comoediae et mimographi et communes rhetorum loci in novercam saevissimam declamabunt. Si privignus languerit et condoluerit caput, infamaberis ut venefica … Oro te, quid habent tantum boni secundae nuptiae, ut haec mala valeant compensare?

(A marriage settlement is now composed for you so that soon you will be induced to make a will. Your husband will feign sickness and will do for you, who will certainly die, what he wants you to do for him, who will certainly live. Or should you have sons by the second husband, domestic strife and internal disputes are inevitable. You will not be allowed to love your children, or to look equally on those to whom you have given birth. You will slip them their food secretly; yet he will bear a grudge against the dead man, and unless you hate your sons, he will think that you still love their father. But should he have offspring by a former wife, when he brings you into his home, even were you the kindest of women, every comedy and writer of mimes, every cliché of the rhetorician will declare you to be the cruellest stepmother. If your stepson is off-colour or has a headache you will be slandered as a poisoner … What benefit, pray tell, do second marriages have to compensate for these troubles?)

87 Jerome uses the image of the comedy to warn Furia that, if she remarries, she is in danger of becoming a public figure of ridicule, the antithesis of the definition of gloria

87 Jerome, Ep. 54.15.
among the elite. She may become the cruel stepmother against whom ‘omnes comoediae et mimographi et communes rhetorum … declamabunt’. Young widows need their own treatise. Sexually experienced, able to move about in society and free of the restraints of a husband, they are particularly dangerous. There is irony in the picture Jerome presents of widows falling prey to importunate and unscrupulous clergy:

Clerici ipsi, quos et magisterio esse oportuerat et timori, osculantur capita patronarum et extenta manu, ut benedicere eos putes velle, si nescias, pretium accipiunt salutandi. Illae interim quae sacerdotes suo vident indigere praesidio, eriguntur in superbiam, et quia maritorum expertae dominatum viduitatis praefert libertatem, castae vocantur et nonnae.

(The very clergy who ought to be revered for the authority of their teaching, kiss these patronesses on the forehead, and putting out their hand so that, if you did not know better, you might suppose them to be about to utter a blessing, receive a payment for their visit. The women, meanwhile, seeing that priests cannot do without their support, are puffed up with pride; and since, having experienced the oppression of marriage, they prefer the independence of widowhood, and are deemed chaste nuns.)

Such suspicions of canvassing money were levelled against Jerome when he lived in Rome. For Jerome, attack is the best defence by discrediting other mentors and depicting widows who attach themselves to such men as foolish and misusing their power of patronage. Nevertheless, he has also learnt some discretion from his past. He carefully draws attention to Furia’s initiating the request for counsel:

Obsecras litteris et suppliciter deprecaris, ut tibi scribam, immo rescribam, quomodo vivere debeas et viduitatis coronam inlaeso pudicitiae nomine conservare.

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88 Jerome, Ep. 54.13.
89 Jerome, Ep. 22.16.
90 Jerome, Ep. 45.2.
(You beg and beseech me in your letter that I should write to you, or rather that I should write again, on how you ought to live, maintaining the crown of widowhood with an untarnished reputation for chastity.)

He will repeat twice more that they are acquainted only through an exchange of letters that she has initiated.

While Jerome is unfair in portraying all Roman women as promiscuous, painted, frivolous or intellectually pretentious, the purpose of his satire is to contrast them with his patrons who know themselves to be part of a clever, morally rigorous group in the hands of an intellectually superior and honourable mentor. He deals with the issue of disciplined pagans by simply ignoring them and implies that his widows outstrip pagans in both virtue and learning. So, in addition to his devastating caricature of the perils of remarriage, there is the customary learned exposition, along with the usual exhortation to earnestness in studying the Scriptures. He then sets about enticing Furia to join members of her extended family in Bethlehem and to share in the riches of their scholarly achievements:

O si videres sororem tuam et illud sacri oris eloquium coram audire contingeret, cerneres in parvo corpusculo ingentes animos, audires totam veteris et novi testamenti supellectilem ex illius corde fervere!

(Oh, if you were to see your sister, and to hear in person the eloquence of those holy lips and to recognise the powerful spirit in that small body, and if you could hear the whole content of the Old and New Testament bubbling up from her heart!)

Jerome had warned her of the dangers of filial duty. Not only has she the example of Paula’s holiness, she may also infer that she will become as learned as Paula, were she to follow her example and remove to Bethlehem. But there is also the implied promise

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91 Jerome, Ep. 54.1.  
92 Jerome, Ep. 54.3, 6, respectively.  
93 Furia is apparently well read in the classics, given the abundance of allusions to them in the letter.  
94 Jerome, Ep. 54.16, 17. See 55, 104; 192 above.  
95 Jerome, Ep. 54.13. The reference is to Paula.  
96 Jerome, Ep. 54.2–3.
of eloquentia, a quality in the domain of the male rhetorician.\textsuperscript{97} Values are reinterpreted such that celibate women attain to the same qualities as the elite male.

In his prosopography, Rebenich portrays those in Rome as part of Jerome’s circle and claims that the relationships of amicitia continued uninterrupted despite his departure for Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{98} Rousseau, however, argues neatly that:

Jerome becomes in the process a hologram formed at the point where other people’s lives converged: beautifully defined, but lacking in presence. Reading Rebenich is like attending a party where the guest of honour fails to appear.\textsuperscript{99}

He strove to maintain contacts with Rome, since Paula’s considerable fortune was diminishing. Bethlehem, like Syria, was hardly the wilderness; situated about nine kilometres from Jerusalem, the centre of the diocese, within reach of the libraries of Caesarea and on the pilgrims’ route. Again he importuned his amici to join him, as he had done in the past.\textsuperscript{100}

Jerome again insinuates amicitia, by recounting for Furia a satirical snippet of a lady pilgrim, suggestive of a shared intimacy, superiority and mockery that bridge the client-patron gap, as he had done in the past with widows:\textsuperscript{101}

Vidimus nuper ignominiosum per totum orientem volitasse: et aetas et cultus et habitus et incessus, indiscreta societas, exquisitae epulae, regius apparatus Neronis et Sardanapalli nuptias loquebantur.

(I have lately seen the most shocking sight that has flitted around the entire east. Her age and style, her dress and deportment, her promiscuous company, her gourmet banquets and her regal paraphernalia evoke the bride of Nero or of Sardanapalus.)\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} Stefan Rebenich, Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992), 193–208.
\textsuperscript{100} See Jerome, Ep. 14.
\textsuperscript{101} See Jerome’s letter to Marcella ridiculing Onasus in Ep. 40.
\textsuperscript{102} Jerome, Ep. 54.13.
The woman’s costly display is an affront to anyone who shares Jerome’s scholarly vision, as, he implies, Furia does. A further appeal in the letter to a shared superiority lies in Jerome’s interpolation of Greek – such as in title of Galen’s work and his reference to Naomi’s name – where he assumes that Furia will know the meaning of the Greek: ‘quaε nobiscum sonat παρακεκλημένη’ (‘which for us signifies “comforted”’).

So Jerome hoped for another enormously wealthy patron in Bethlehem and reasserts his role as a spiritual mentor. He reworks his persona of the prophetic desert figure, hated by the establishment in Rome, implying that his own exile is a result of their opposition. He takes the opportunity to create a treatise for (rich) young widows that strongly echoes his letter to Eustochium: satirical sketches of the disadvantages of marriage and predatory clergy; a plethora of Scriptural and classical allusions; and the threat of loss of reward or even salvation. In promising eloquentia and the erudition at his disposal, Jerome implies that Furia may become as learned as the educated males who attack him. The very genre chosen tells the reader something of Furia that sets her apart from older widows. Furia’s agency and independence is evident in other ways. References to her famous celibate ancestors indicate an illustrious family. Even his threat of ridicule testifies to the presence of a pride in the family’s status and reputation, with its attendant desire to avoid public humiliation. Jerome’s use of Greek, Scripture and his appeals to the classical canon intimates that she may aspire to Paula’s scholarly status. One may infer that these were of interest to Furia. Moreover, in approaching Jerome, she was exercising her choice of mentor as a potential patron. Finally, she exercised independence in that, although she did not marry, neither did she follow Jerome to Bethlehem.

Marcella, an Independent Widow

We have seen Jerome’s accommodation of his text to the status, power and independent decisions of the Aniciae. The Aniciae, however, were not part of Jerome’s circle. Marcella, on the other hand, was Jerome’s principal correspondent and demonstrates both the benefits of an association with Jerome and, at the same time, an independence centred on her rank and role as patron, despite Jerome’s representation of her as

103 For cost of Jerome’s library, see Williams, The Monk and the Book, 133–66
104 Jerome, Ep. 54.17. Jerome’s translation is idiosyncratic as ‘Naomi’ is usually interpreted to mean ‘pleasant’. See Ruth 1.20.
105 See 136ff. above.
106 Jerome, Ep. 54.1.
107 See Ch. 4 passim.
acquiescent in all matters, scholarly and theological.\textsuperscript{108} Further, Jerome sought friendship on equal terms with her.

Jerome generally experienced disappointment in his friendships with men.\textsuperscript{109} He sought reconciliation with Rufinus:

\begin{quote}
conscientiae nostrae testis est Dominus, post reconciliatas amicitias nullum intercessisse rancorem, quo quempiam laederemus; quin potius cum omni cautione, ne saltim casus in malivolentiam verteretur.
\end{quote}

(The Lord is witness to my conscience that since our reconciliation no rancour has intervened whereby I might do harm to anyone; quite the contrary, I have taken the utmost so that no incident might be turned into an occasion for ill-will.)\textsuperscript{110}

However, his hopes were dashed by Rufinus’ intransigence and the suppression of his own conciliatory letter by Pammachius.\textsuperscript{111}

Older widows, on taking the vow of celibacy assumed a virtue that made friendship possible. We have examined his relationship with Paula, but in Marcella, he encountered the inflexible social distance maintained between a client and a patron, of the old order. How Jerome and Marcella each interpreted their relationship illustrates the differences in expectation from their association. That Marcella primarily perceived the relationship as that of client/patron is reflected in Jerome’s complaint that her letters are always requests for his skills:

\begin{quote}
Epistolare officium est de re familiari aut de cotidiana conversatione aliquid scribere … Verum dum tute in tractatibus occuparis, nihil mihi scribis, nisi quod me torqueat et scripturas legere compellat.
\end{quote}

(The purpose of a letter is to write something about one’s normal life or daily conversations … But you concentrate on scholarly treatises, and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{108} No letters exist from Marcella. The reader must interpret what Jerome writes of her in its social context.
\textsuperscript{109} See Heliodorus’ rejection of overtures to join him in Chalcis (Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 14.6); Pammachius declined to come to Bethlehem, 223 below.
\textsuperscript{110} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 81.1.
\textsuperscript{111} See 20 above.
\end{flushright}
you write nothing else to me, except to tie me in knots and force me to read the Scriptures.)\textsuperscript{112}

Jerome had hoped for letters betokening friendship, but she cross-examined him and pursued him, not only through their correspondence, but also in conversation.\textsuperscript{113} Of course, this enhances Jerome’s reputation but Rousseau’s observation that Jerome had a ‘morbid sense of isolation’ seems echoed here.\textsuperscript{114} She showed an embarrassing independence in resisting enticement to follow Jerome to the Holy Land and expressed disapproval of Jerome’s abusive defence of his translation methods:

\begin{quote}
Scio te cum ista legeris rugare frontem, et libertatem rursum seminarium timere rixarum, ac meum, si fieri potest, os digito velle comprimare, ne audeam dicere quae alii facere non erubescunt.
\end{quote}

(I know that as you read these words you wrinkle your brows, and fear that my freedom of expression is the source of new disputes and that, if it were possible, you would willingly put your finger on my mouth that I do not dare to say what others do not blush to do.)\textsuperscript{115}

Marcella, despite her renunciation of the world, was a sophisticated woman, both theologically and socially. She was used to running her own life.\textsuperscript{116} Cousin to Pammachius, she was the most prominent member of the inter-related families who supported Jerome.\textsuperscript{117} While accepting Cain’s estimate that Jerome penned his letter to Principia on the death of Marcella ‘in part to justify his spiritual, scholarly, and theological authority to his followers but mainly to the wider Latin Christian world that remained wary of him’, I suggest that Marcella’s own agency, made possible through her status, is significant, though not the whole picture.\textsuperscript{118} Cain’s analysis suggests a Svengali-like Jerome, who rendered Marcella powerless, as he fashioned a persona for himself and also for her. Despite her support and interaction with Jerome’s scholarship and acceptance of his mentoring in asceticism, Marcella sometimes acted

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 29.1.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 25.1.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Rousseau, “Jerome’s Search for Self-Identity,” 123.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 27.2.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 127.2, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Vessey’s throw-away line that it would have been necessary to invent Marcella, had she not existed, hardly seems credible when she is used as a living \textit{exemplum} to Furia. See Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 54.18. Vessey’s purpose is to show that Jerome ‘writes’ Marcella to establish himself as a new Origen. See Mark Vessey, “Jerome’s Origen,” \textit{StudPatr} 28, no. 2 (1993): 135–45.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Andrew Cain, “Rethinking Jerome’s Portrait of Holy Women,” in \textit{Jerome of Stridon}, ed. Andrew Cain and Joseph Lössl (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 49.
\end{itemize}
independently. Cain argues that Jerome creates the identity of a student of Scripture for her – ‘divinarum scripturarum ardor incredibilis’ (‘her enthusiasm for the Holy Scriptures beggared belief’) – suggesting that Jerome’s intention is to highlight his own singular guidance of her.\(^ {119}\)

Et quia alicuius tunc nominis aestimabar super studio scripturarum, numquam convenit quin de scripturis aliquid interrogaret … quicquid in nobis longo fuit studio congregatum et meditacione diuturna quasi in naturam versum hoc illa libavit, hoc didicit atque possedit.

(And because in those days I had a reputation for being a student of the Scriptures, she never came to me without asking some question about Scripture … whatever in me had been attained by long study and had become second nature by constant meditation, this she tasted, this she learnt and made her own.)\(^ {120}\)

In Cain’s view, Jerome reminds his readers that ‘no matter how far Marcella advanced she was still the apprentice and he the master’:

Sic interrogata respondebat ut etiam sua non sua diceret, sed vel mea vel cuiuslibet alterius, ut et in ipso, quod docebat, se discipulam fateretur.

(Whenever she was asked a question, she would give her opinion not as being her own but as being mine or someone else’s so as to admit that she was a student in that in which she was a teacher.)\(^ {121}\)

These inferences may be qualified. First, it is not only Jerome’s opinion that Marcella might refer to in giving an answer on difficult questions but ‘cuiuslibet alterius’. Marcella was open to speculation on other views outside her palace and Jerome’s control, as her requests for information on Montanism and Novatianism reveal.\(^ {122}\) Moreover, this passage does not in fact diminish Marcella. On the contrary, Jerome attributes her self-effacement and reference to her mentors as Marcella’s way of protecting her reputation, so that she is not seen to be contravening the injunction

\(^{119}\) Cain, “Rethinking Jerome’s Portrait of Holy Women,” 43. See also Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 127.4.

\(^{120}\) Cain, “Rethinking Jerome’s Portrait of Holy Women,” 47 (Cain’s translation).

\(^{121}\) Ibid.

\(^{122}\) Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 41, 42. Novatian had taught that those who denied Christ during the persecution were guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit. For an account of the heresies see Benoit Jeanjean, \textit{Saint Jérôme et l’hérésie} (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1999), 224–33; 33–8.
against women teaching men, in 1 Tim 2.12. It may be inferred that Marcella, whatever caveat she may have placed on her answers, was not hesitant in giving them and Jerome, as a client, was responsible for guarding her reputation. Jerome had never discouraged women from formulating their own opinions. He may seek to bar the child, Paula, from reading classical texts like Roman boys, but she is to engage from an early age with the Scriptures and the writings of Cyprian, Athanasius and Hilary.\textsuperscript{123} With such a solid Christian education his advice is: ‘ceteros sic legat, ut magis iudicet, quam sequatur’ (‘let her read the rest of them so that she may be one who discerns, rather than one who follows’).\textsuperscript{124} If this degree of judgment was allowed a novice, it is reasonable to infer that much more was allowed to a mature woman of Marcella’s reputation. I suggest that Jerome is casting Marcella in the role of a female philosopher for whom there was a pagan precedent in Hipparchia, who argued with men.\textsuperscript{125} Marcella, also, showed no embarrassment in confronting the male supporters of Rufinus and Melania in the Origenist debate.\textsuperscript{126}

Second, while Jerome puts himself in a very favourable light, Marcella’s position as a potential patron demanded that she would have sought him out, precisely because he had certain gifts (in this case a knowledge of Eastern asceticism and a scholar’s reputation) which she already sought in a mentor.\textsuperscript{127} Jerome’s shyness, I suggest, was not merely conventional but is explained in Jerome’s first letter to Marcella on the death of Lea.\textsuperscript{128} Rather than seeing the letter, with its insensitive opening launch into the exegesis of Psalm 72, simply as the promotion of his exegetical skill at the expense of his patron’s feelings, it may be interpreted as the social awkwardness of one who, although an ordained priest, was at this point in his career unused to pastoral care, let alone the illustrious ladies of the Aventine.\textsuperscript{129} He had confidence in his exegetical skills, so that is how he begins. The letter on the death of Blesilla also seems to reflect crassness but Jerome, like other mentors of women, was always under suspicion of sexual impropriety and he may have taken the decision to express himself in terms of

\textsuperscript{123} Jerome, Ep. 107.12.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. Jerome could not expect to guide her, even though he urged that she be sent to join Paula and Eustochium. See also Ep. 130.19, where Jerome recommends the reading of other authors.
\textsuperscript{125} Diogenes Laertes, \textit{Vitae} VI.
\textsuperscript{126} Jerome, Ep. 127.9 and 50–1 above.
\textsuperscript{128} Jerome, Ep. 127.7.
\textsuperscript{129} Pace Georg Grützmacher, \textit{Hieronymus: Eine biographische Studie zur alten Kirchengeschichte}, 3 vols (Liepzig: Dieterich’schte Verlag, 1901–08), I.62. Jerome is described as: ‘eines Salonbeichtvaters im Stile der Abbés des Zeitalters Ludwigs des XIV.’
the rigorous ascetic and scholar, lest any expression of warmth or sympathy be misinterpreted. His later threnody for Paula is much more expressive of genuine feeling.\textsuperscript{130}

It would be scandalous for Marcella’s group not to have a male mentor.\textsuperscript{131} In fact, she showed discernment in recognising Jerome’s talent and was prepared to support him, despite his excesses.\textsuperscript{132} Jerome’s self-promotion and vanity often distract the reader from the fact that he was visionary both in his \textit{veritas Hebraica} and his exegesis. Furthermore, that Marcella was scholarly is confirmed by the broad range of topics that Jerome’s letters encompassed in response to her questions.\textsuperscript{133} These letters not only show off Jerome’s erudition, they also display Marcella’s interests and her right as patron to call upon Jerome for his expertise.

Third, Jerome’s exaggeration of Marcella’s role in establishing the celibate life in Rome may be interpreted as the action of a client burnishing the reputation of his patron.\textsuperscript{134} As he has done with other women such as Eustochium, Paula and the Aniciae, he makes her a heroine of the new Roman order, as she confronts the barbarians and protects Principia.\textsuperscript{135} It may be inferred from her role as patron that she was already an enthusiast for the unpopular Eastern asceticism in approaching him. Jerome had not the status to approach her. Further, while Cain brings helpful insights into the production of Jerome’s \textit{Ad Marcellam epistularum liber}, as a means of promoting his \textit{veritas Hebraica}, the \textit{liber} might equally be seen as a tribute to her learning in the way that a poem might be published extolling the virtues of a Maecenas.\textsuperscript{136} A picture emerges of a courageous, learned but fastidious woman who supported Jerome in the face of opposition.\textsuperscript{137}

In 386, Jerome had written to her on behalf of Eustochium and Paula extolling the virtues of life in Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{138} Marcella, however, exerting her independence, stayed in Rome. She expressed grave doubts about the Holy Land: that it was under a curse as a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} See M. Turcan, “Jérôme et les femmes,” \textit{Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé} 2, no. 1 (1968), 262.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} See his attack on marriage in \textit{adv. Iov}.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} See 67 above.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} Cain, “Rethinking Jerome’s Portrait of Holy Women,” 54–5.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 127.13.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Cain, “Rethinking Jerome’s Portrait of Holy Women,” 62.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Andrew Cain, \textit{The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity} (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 93.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 46.
\end{itemize}
result of the death of Christ.\textsuperscript{139} It is possible that Jerome simply made up this objection, so that he could deal with an issue that may have been troubling other Christians. However, another explanation offers itself. There is a slight cooling of relations after Jerome’s departure and Paula’s arrival in the Holy Land.\textsuperscript{140}

The \textit{consolatio} for Marcella lacks the feeling present in that written for Paula. It seems that Jerome finally accepted that the relationship was much more distant. This is illustrated in a letter sent to Pammachius and Marcella in 402. Typical of that of a client to a patron, it contains a copy of the Paschal letter of Theophilus of Alexandria in Greek with Jerome’s translation in Latin. It was a response to accusations that his translation of the previous year had tampered with the original.\textsuperscript{141} Marcella and Pammachius were Jerome’s most powerful patrons in Rome, both in terms of finance and influence, and the letter, ascribed jointly to them, indicates Marcella’s authority. While both patrons had embraced monasticism, in the end it was a monasticism centred on the household in Rome and on their terms, not Jerome’s. Marcella accepted the enhancement of her reputation as a scholar but Jerome overestimated his authority over her and was obliged to come as a client, seeking support against the calumny of his enemies.

Rousseau raises an important issue with regard to Marcella and the widows of Jerome’s acquaintance that is pertinent to this thesis:

\begin{quote}
one is able to ask more boldly whether it was not the women who forced the pace of cultural change, combining bookish reflection and high moral endeavour in the service of the new religion. They, perhaps, were the great women behind the supposedly great men.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

He points to the influence of women in the lives of Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine, ‘the movers and shakers in the formation of Christian culture’.\textsuperscript{143} I suggest that Jerome, quite early, recognised the importance of these women for the very qualities mentioned by Rousseau and sought to foster them.\textsuperscript{144} He may pay lip service to the conventions of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[139] Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 46.3.
\item[140] There are fewer letters and the tone is more formal.
\item[142] Rousseau, “Learned Women,” 117.
\item[143] Ibid., 124
\item[144] Ambrose, on the other hand decried erudition: ‘Aperi ad haec aures tuas, os tuum claude. Aperi aures, ut fidem audias: claude os, ut teneas verecundiam’ (‘Open your ears to these things, close your mouth. Open your ears so that you may listen to the words of the faith: close your mouth, so that you may hold fast your modesty’), Ambrose, \textit{De virginitate} 3.15 ed. F. Gori (Turnhout: Brepols,1897).
\end{footnotes}
a submissive, intellectual quietude in women, but as we have repeatedly seen, he utilised their familiarity with the classics and Scriptures. It gave him a chance to display his own cleverness, but it also suggests that he could find an intellectual engagement without the competitive edge of male contact. Towards the end of his life, Jerome’s writing would reflect his assumptions about the classical understanding of aristocratic women. If Demetrias could not follow his classical allusions, Proba would certainly be able to explain it to her or call upon someone in her extensive patronage network to do so. Further, Jerome’s overt likening of her to a new Aeneas would have been futile had Proba not been able to make the associations. Jerome accommodates himself to the aspirations of these women of the nobilitas, acknowledging their influence and education.

Jerome came into Marcella’s orbit when she had already gathered her own group of female ascetics and was a well-read and established Christian. He wrote her to promote himself but it is through the support of such women and their interest in exposition of the Scriptures that the ascetic version of the Christian discourse proved so influential. Jerome tapped into this culture but also contributed to it. He shaped their scholarship but he did not create it. Jerome needed these women, for without their belief in his abilities, Jerome may not have survived in the increasingly acrimonious milieu of Church politics, not least the Pelagian controversy.

Fabiola and Pammachius – A Contrast in Commitment

As Jerome’s reputation as a scholar grew, so did his financial needs, exacerbated by the volume of the work, between 386 and 392. In 386, alone, he wrote his ‘Life of Malchus’ and ‘Life of Hilarion’, in addition to commentaries on Titus, Ephesians, Galatians and Philemon. The commentary on Galatians was dedicated to Paula and Eustochium; the commentary on Ephesians was written at the behest of Marcella. Paulinian, Domnio with Rogatianus, Lupulus and Valerianus, Sophronius and Chromatius of Aquileia also had works dedicated to them in the following decade. Ten works are undedicated and nine additional works are dedicated to Paula and Eustochium, half of which were

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145 See 67–8; 151–2; 159; 213. N.B., Jerome, Ep. 123.
146 Jerome, Ep. 130.7.
147 See 147–8 above.
written in the period 392–93. Obviously, Jerome’s patronage was limited and he did not ‘sell’ his books, as Williams observes:

The book trade was hardly sufficient to supply copies of classic literary texts used in education, much less of technical treatises newly produced by living authors. Books were circulated privately by those who had the time and the learning to read and the means to make copies. Furthermore, books in antiquity functioned as elements within a heterogeneous economy of gift giving.

The dedication of books to Paula and Eustochium indicated his profound debt to them and his honouring of their scholarship. His need for patrons is witnessed in the sixty-six of his extant letters in the next decade. Some are related to his contretemps with Augustine, but most are to patrons, old and prospective.

To solve his financial problems Jerome once more resorted to the conventions of epistolography, employing the ‘wish you were here’ topos, for maintaining relationships and bridging gaps. This was coupled with what Rousseau identifies as a ‘morbid sense of isolation’. I suggest that Jerome hoped his ‘circle’ would decamp to Palestine, settling their wealth there. Jerome hints strongly at this in his letter to Pammachius, after the death of his wife. Although he commends Pammachius for becoming a monk and for his generous setting up of a hostel, he adds this rider:

Et cum omnia quae dixi, feceris, ab Eustochio tua Paulaque vinceris, si non opere et certe sexu.

(And when you would have done all the things I have mentioned, you will have been outdone by Eustochium and by Paula, if not by their actual deeds, certainly by reason of their sex.)

He is employing the common mechanism of shaming a man through the example of his women. Using Joseph and Mary’s journey to Bethlehem as a conceit, Jerome

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151 Ibid., 286–94; patronage concerns almost 50 percent.

152 See Rousseau, “Jerome’s Search for Self-Identity,” 129.

153 See Jerome, Ep. 47 to Desiderius and Serenilla.

154 Jerome, Ep. 66.13.
implies that by refusing to come to Bethlehem, Pammachius, like those in the past, would be losing an opportunity to provide hospitality for Christ:

Nos in ista provincia aedificato monasterio et diversorio propter extracto, ne forte et modo Ioseph cum Maria Bethlehem veniens non inveniat hospitium, tantis de toto orbe confluentibus turbis obruimur monachorum, ut nec coeptum opus deserere, nec supra vires ferre valeamus. Unde quia paene nobis illud de evangelio contigit ut futurae turris non ante computaremus inpesas, compulsi sumus fratem Paulinianum ad patriam mittere, ut semirutas villulas quae barbarorum effugerunt manus et parentum communium cineres venderet, ne coeptum sanctorum ministerium deserentes, risum maledicis et aemulis praebamus.

(We, in this far-off province, after building a monastery, with a hostel constructed beside it lest Joseph and Mary coming now by chance to Bethlehem fail to find hospitality, are swamped by such a host of monks converging from all over the world with the result that I can neither abandon the task begun nor bear what is beyond my strength. As a result – since the example in the Gospel almost applies to me in that I did not count the cost beforehand of raising the tower – I have been obliged to send my brother Paulinian to my homeland to sell broken down farmlets that escaped the attention of the barbarians, and the final ashes of our parents. I am doing this so that I do not desert the ministry to the saints that has been begun and to fuel the derision of the slanderous, envious critics.)

Jerome applies pressure by pointing out that he is surrendering his patrimony (which is insignificant compared with that of Pammachius). The tenure of land was an important measure of rank and Jerome is making a bid for equality with Pammachius.

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157 Rousseau, however, considers that Jerome is looking to Pammachius to bring about spiritual transformation in Rome. See P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 117–18.
But I suggest that Jerome was disappointed in Pammachius, because, while he was prepared to wear sackcloth in the Senate, he was not prepared to give up the Senate itself and follow Jerome to Palestine. He continued as Jerome’s patron, asking his advice on scholarly matters but remained in Rome.\(^{159}\) As in the case of Marcella, Jerome underestimated the social distance between client and patron. Jerome flattered Pammachius as a second Aeneas and a follower of Abraham.\(^{160}\) Rousseau sees this as fulfilled in Pammachius founding a ‘new’ city like Aeneas, and building a hostel for the poor the sick and the homeless.\(^{161}\) But these references to Aeneas and Abraham have another interpretation. Both men left their homelands in search of new lives under divine guidance. God’s promises of blessing to Abraham flowed from his initial obedience in leaving Ur and travelling to Canaan and defined him spiritually.

> Now the \textsc{Lord} said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”\(^{162}\)

Jerome has already used these words from Genesis to Marcella, in urging her to follow Eustochium and Paula to Bethlehem.\(^{163}\) He faced in Bethlehem the problem that he had encountered in Rome. Men were reluctant to surrender the insignia of their status as Romans.\(^{164}\) He would still continue to get letters from Oceanus, Domnio and Pammachius on matters of religious controversy, but they never gave him the support of his widows.\(^{165}\) Jerome, I submit, chastens Pammachius in the person of Fabiola.

Rich, cultured and pious, Fabiola seemed the answer to his financial problems, when she arrived in Bethlehem. Her first marriage to a husband who was ‘vitiosus’ (‘corrupt’) had ended in divorce.\(^{166}\) After the death of her second husband, she undertook a spectacular penance, was received into the communion of the Church, exchanging silk

\(^{159}\) See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 87; 93.
\(^{160}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 66.4, 6, 11.
\(^{161}\) Rousseau, \textit{Ascetics, Authority and the Church}, 117–18.
\(^{162}\) Gen 12.1–3.
\(^{163}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 46.2.
\(^{164}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 53.
\(^{165}\) Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 48; 49; 83; 97.
\(^{166}\) Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 77.3.
dresses and cosmetics for sack cloth (a sure indicator of godliness with Jerome).\textsuperscript{167} Jerome’s later \textit{consolatio} for Fabiola is extraordinarily tolerant of her remarriage, particularly if the stern warnings of the letter to Amandus against remarriage refer to her.\textsuperscript{168} Jerome treats Fabiola, as he treated other potential patrons, by presenting questionable actions in a favourable light.\textsuperscript{169} Yet again a woman of wealth and rank influences the text. Fabiola was a member of the circle that included Pammachius, Domnio, Marcella and Oceanus. But she did not remain in Bethlehem. Although the threatened invasion was the ostensible cause of her departure, another reason is candidly alluded to by Jerome, ‘\textit{Erat in illo tempore quaedam apud nos dissensio}’ (‘At that time there was a certain disagreement among us’).\textsuperscript{170}

Jerome’s description of her reduction to poverty for Christ’s sake is romanticised. Clark points to his injunction that ‘Christians should divest themselves totally and immediately of their goods, lest they fall into the sin of Ananias and Sapphira’.\textsuperscript{171} But, as we have already shown, rich widows rarely gave all their wealth to either the poor or the scholarly ‘poor’.\textsuperscript{172}

Moreover, Jerome attached, to his \textit{consolatio} for Fabiola, a treatise on the resting places of the Israelites’ journey in the wilderness.\textsuperscript{173} His claim that he had prepared it at her request suggests that he had hopes of a legacy from her executor, Oceanus. Fabiola had benefitted from Jerome’s instruction in the past through an arcane exposition on the high priestly garments.\textsuperscript{174} Through this letter he advertises his expertise and promotes the monasteries in Bethlehem. He also makes a learned heroine of her as with other women in his letters.\textsuperscript{175} When she set up the hostel with Pammachius, Jerome gave her an extraordinary status:

\begin{quote}
Certabant vir et femina, quis in Portu Abrahae tabernaculum figeret, et haec erat inter utrumque contentio, quis humanitate superaret.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{167} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 77.4.
\textsuperscript{168} See Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 55.
\textsuperscript{169} See 148 above, re the Aniciae.
\textsuperscript{170} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 77.8, in which Jerome refers to the Origenist controversy. The Huns had passed through the Caspian Gates in in 394 and the East was under imminent threat.
\textsuperscript{171} Elizabeth A. Clark, “\textit{Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity},” \textit{ATR Evanston} 63, no. 3 (1981): 242.
\textsuperscript{172} Only Paula completely reduced herself to debt and even she provided for her family beforehand, 15 above.
\textsuperscript{173} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 78.
\textsuperscript{174} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 64.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{Inter alias} Marcella, Eustochium, Demetrias and the Aniciae, Paula and Artemesia.
(A man and a woman were in competition as to who would erect Abraham’s tent in Portus and this was the struggle between the two, who would exceed the other in compassion.)

In this conceit, where Pammachius and Fabiola are pictured locked in combat to do good, Jerome achieves a number of ends. He confers on Fabiola the status of the biblical hero, Abraham; he gives her equal status with Pammachius in well-doing, and subtly he draws attention to the fact that, Fabiola, like Abraham, was leaving her homeland, but Pammachius was not. Nevertheless, the praise of both is carefully fulsome. Pammachius was, after all, a senator. But Fabiola emerges as the spiritually superior. She is depicted as more estimable than Furius, Papirius, Scipio and Pompey for her triumph over her shady past. The endorsement of this is reflected in the hero’s funeral that she is given in Rome. This fits the general pattern identified in this thesis of Jerome’s conferring fame on the women of his correspondence, by taking a Roman cultural plot and reworking it. Fabiola surpasses the heroes of Rome’s greatness. She could not have hoped to do so in the past, the honour given to pagan widows notwithstanding. But now a new Rome, predicated on humility and repentance is being ushered in. Even the women whom Jerome lampoons for their worldliness may also become heroines: learned, pious, spiritually superior to men, even senators, and in line for the secondary crown of glory, if, like Fabiola, they will repent.

We have encountered above the feminist view interprets Jerome as demanding that women become like men, as men represent the benchmark in virtue. But Jerome regularly uses other women as exempla of virtue. The letter to Furia concludes with a slide into a panegyric for Marcella. It serves two purposes: it brings fame to Marcella, and it also portrays her as a model as powerful as any Scriptural image. Demetrias also may safely learn from her grandmother. Eustochium’s consolation consists entirely of hearing an account of her mother’s virtue.

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176 This refers to Abram’s offering hospitality to the three angels in Gen 18.1–8.
177 Jerome, Ep. 77.10.
178 Jerome, Ep. 77.6, 10.
179 See 117ff.; 129ff.; 147ff.above.
180 See 4; 189–90 above.
181 See Jerome, Ep. 54.8.
182 See 158ff. above; Jerome, Ep. 130.7.
183 See Jerome, Ep. 108, passim.
Jerome Looks to Gaul to Assert His Episcopal Authority

Preparing the Ground, Letter 117

Most scholarly interest in this letter centres on the question of whether or not it is written to a ‘real’ person.\textsuperscript{184} Cain by-passes this debate, defining Letter 117 as a declamation, the apogee of rhetorical education aimed at a wide audience.\textsuperscript{185} He contends that the letter gave Jerome the opportunity ‘to declaim about a hypothetical scenario that could conceivably be anywhere in the Christian world’.\textsuperscript{186} This explanation makes the letter more understandable. Jerome had previously railed against \textit{subintroductae virgines} in his letter to Eustochium.\textsuperscript{187} These ‘spiritual wives’, either dedicated virgins or widows, were both a common phenomenon in the Church and also condemned by it.\textsuperscript{188} Wider issues of authority are also present. The Gallic ascetics were generally opposed to the exigencies of Jerome’s asceticism and his pamphlet war with Vigilantus had polarised people.\textsuperscript{189} Moreover, because it was obviously intended for a wider circulation, it might be seen as a bid for episcopal authority.

Cain establishes that Jerome, through this letter, demonstrated, by his learnedness and pastoral concern, that he was more worthy of the title of bishop than others who held it. Moreover, in the introduction to the letter, Jerome claims not to involve himself in the domestic concerns of others:

\begin{quote}
\textit{quasi vero episcopalem cathedram teneam et non clausus cellula ac procul a turbis remotus vel praeterita plangam vitia vel vitare nitar praesentia.}
\end{quote}

(as if I held an episcopal chair instead of being shut up in a monastic cell where, far removed from the world’s turmoil, I lament the sins of the past and try to avoid present temptations.)\textsuperscript{190}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{184}{For the view that the letter is bogus, see D. S. Wiesen, \textit{Jerome as Satirist} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 82–4; Kelly, \textit{Jerome, His Life Writings and Controversies}, 276.}
\footnote{185}{Ibid.}
\footnote{186}{Andrew Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula 117} on the \textit{Subintroductae: Satire, Apology and Ascetic Propaganda},” \textit{Augustinianum} 49, no. 1 (2009): 127.}
\footnote{187}{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.14.}
\footnote{188}{Clark, \textit{Women in Late Antiquity}, 77–81.}
\footnote{189}{Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula 117} on the \textit{Subintroductae},” 126.}
\footnote{190}{Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 117.1; Cain’s translation, Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula 117} on the \textit{Subintroductae},” 128.}
\end{footnotes}
This is a typical *recusatio*, a demurrer of fitness for the task. However, Jerome is validating his own spiritual authority, ‘in contradistinction to that of a bishop, in a powerfully suggestive way, namely by appealing to his exemplary piety’. Rapp cites the ascetic monk, Antony, who rejected the offer of a visit to Constantius, ‘lest the qualities of a monk be lost in vainglory’. She then comments that, ‘in a paradoxical inversion, the humility that prompts the rejection of ordination actually demonstrates a candidate’s supreme qualification for ecclesiastical office’. So in imitating Antony, I suggest, Jerome sets out to show that he is more pastorally suited as a bishop than the inadequate incumbents. Cain regards the demurral as the assertion of the superior authority of a spiritual monk over that of the busy, consecrated bishop, caught up in administration and the activities of the diocese. This analysis seems sound, and fits wider themes in Jerome’s writing, as he seeks to build up the monastic and ascetic life. I suggest, in addition, that the pastoral aspect is the hallmark of a bishop and Jerome is laying claim to that function, if not the title.

The fact that the letter requesting pastoral advice purports to have come to him from far-off Gaul implies that there is no one closer to deal with such an issue. The importunate monk asks Jerome to recapture the fire of his letter to Eustochium which had managed to offend a sizeable proportion of the Christian population of Rome:

Et ille: Nimium, ait, formidolosus; ubi illa quondam constantia, in qua multo sale orbem defricans, Lucilianum quippiam rettulisti? Hoc est, aio, quod me fugat, et labra dividere non sinit. Postquam ergo arguendo crimina, factus sum criminosus.

(“You are too apprehensive” he replied; “where is that former firmness of purpose whereby, ‘scouring the world with a plentiful supply of salt,’ you made your commentary in the style of Lucilius?” “That is precisely”, I retorted, “What makes me take flight and forbids me to

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192 Cain, “Jerome’s *Epistula 117* on the *Subintroductae,*” 128. For recognition of spiritual authority, see Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church,* 125–32.
194 Ibid., 144.
195 Cain, “Jerome’s *Epistula 117* on the *Subintroductae,*” 129.
196 Ibid.
197 Horace, *Satires.* 1.10.
open my lips. For after exposing crimes, I have been made out the
criminal.”)\textsuperscript{198}

He asks, however, that this new letter of advice not be circulated, ‘ut clam sermonem
hunc habeas’ (‘so that you keep this conversation secret’).\textsuperscript{199} This achieves two ends: he
preserves the image of the reclusive, humble monk but at the same time suggests that
the zeal of his old satiric style is still missed by pious Christians.\textsuperscript{200}

Parallels between the two letters are highlighted: the professing virgin with a mother
who is a dedicated widow. However, the Gallic virgin is close to becoming a ‘fallen’
virgin unless she follows the precepts offered to Eustochium. But whereas the lapsed
virgin was forever lost in Letter 22, now there is hope of rehabilitation: the mother’s
employment of a young monk as her major-domo is partially excused in terms of ‘age,
weakness and loneliness’.\textsuperscript{201} Further, as Cain points out, the inflammatory name-calling
of the letter to Eustochium – the referring to the \textit{subintroductae} as ‘meretrices univirae’
(‘one man whores’) – is absent.\textsuperscript{202} The whole tone is non-accusatory: the women are
given the benefit of the doubt, and even the men have hopes of rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{203} I
submit that although the letter reads like a farce (with its lusty widow, \textit{ingénue}
and predatory men), it lacks the bite of the letter to Eustochium and the vision of a new
Rome. The satire of the letter is an ‘encoded message … that the Gallic Church has a
faulty moral compass’ but the sympathetic treatment of the characters is indicative of
Jerome’s pastoral heart.\textsuperscript{204}

The letter is also, I believe, a \textit{riposte} to Vigilantus and the bishops who supported his
views. It demonstrates that wisdom was found in the Holy Land. Jerome had too many
enemies ever to be consecrated as a bishop and there was too much emotional capital
invested in Bethlehem to abandon his pattern of life there. But he perceived himself as a
bishop in the latter years of his life, the shepherd of a flock of learned widows, whom he
pastored through his letters, in precisely the same way that the Apostle Paul, an
‘overseer’ \textit{par excellence}, had tended his flock. Jerome had more than once cast himself
in the role of a latter-day Paul.\textsuperscript{205} Jerome may have felt some entitlement with the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{198} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 117.1.
\item \textsuperscript{199} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 117. Prologue.
\item \textsuperscript{200} Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula} 117 on the \textit{Subintroductae},” 134.
\item \textsuperscript{201} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 117.3.
\item \textsuperscript{202} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.14.
\item \textsuperscript{203} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 117.11.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Cain, “Jerome’s \textit{Epistula} 117 on the \textit{Subintroductae},” 143.
\item \textsuperscript{205} See 17–19, 112–13, 159–61 and 183 above.
\end{itemize}
growing trend to appoint bishop-monks, especially in the East and increasingly in the West with such as Ambrose and Augustine.**206** If, as Richard Finn suggests, ascetic bishops may be perceived as holy men, may not also holy men perceive themselves as *de facto* bishops?**207**

**The Bishop’s Flock: The Learned Widows of Gaul**

Jerome already counted some Gallic widows as sympathetic supporters. Hedibia, an older widow had already applied to him for pastoral support in the matter of Rusticus and Artemia.**208** Hedibia subsequently requested a response to twelve questions on the New Testament. I accept Cain’s view that this was a genuine letter of request, despite scholarly opinion to the contrary.**209** Jerome’s lengthy reply is alluded to as an *opus* in his introduction to his commentary on Isaiah.**210** Further, I note that he concludes with a jibe that the Latins, ‘quorum aures fastidiosae sunt, et ad intelligendas Scripturas sanctas nauseant’ (‘whose ears are very disdainful, and are wearied in understanding the Scriptures’), will ignore him completely, if he adds this commentary to his twelve comments. Jerome employed *opus* for treatises intended for wider distribution.**211** Cain cites the opening of the letter to Hedibia with its hints focusing on their geographical distance, implying amazement that she must seek his instruction, suggesting that once again local authorities are proved inadequate.**212**

The letter to Hedibia is also significant in that it is similar to Jerome’s letters to mature widows such as Marcella and Fabiola, answering questions of Scriptural or theological issues raised by the sender. In fact, it is not different in form or content from similar letters to his male correspondents.**213** This correspondence is distinct from that addressed to young widows. We see that Jerome was viewed by the older women as a trusted source of Scriptural and ascetic insight for their scholarly pursuits. Hedibia’s

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**206** See Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, xiv; for the connection between asceticism and episcopacy, see Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, passim.


**208** See 187 above.


**210** Jerome, Prologue to *Comm. in Es*.

**211** Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, 181.

**212** Because of similarity with the work of Eusebius in answering questions on the differing resurrection accounts, this letter was regarded as a contrivance.

**213** See Jerome, *Epp.* 18 (Pope Damasus); 53 (Paulinus of Nola); 62 (Tranquillinus); 77 (Vitalis) *inter alios*.
previous recourse to him in the case of Rusticus may also suggest a lack of confidence in her local bishop. Bishops were not confined to diocesan boundaries in pastoral matters, as Augustine’s letter to Juliana in Rome indicates.\textsuperscript{214}

In 407, Jerome begins writing his letters to a young widow from Gaul, Ageruchia, informing her that he has often written letters to widows and virgins.\textsuperscript{215} Furthermore, he suggests that she read the letter to Eustochium and implies that her letter will rank with his others.\textsuperscript{216} The letters to Salvina and Ageruchia achieve a number of ends. Jerome asserts that these letters have become a canon for the lives of dedicated virgins and widows.\textsuperscript{217} As we have seen earlier, the paraenetic letter was a call to the philosophical life, with Jerome as guide.\textsuperscript{218} So they, too, will become part of his hall of fame. In addition, just as his letters to Furia sought to maintain his pre-eminence in Rome after he had removed to Bethlehem, so the letter to Ageruchia promotes his reputation in Gaul, in the wake of his struggles with John of Jerusalem.

As in his other letters to young widows and virgins, Jerome fulsomely praises distinguished antecedents and, in this case, the mother, grandmother and aunt.\textsuperscript{219} This declares his propriety in addressing the young woman and claims an intimacy and special knowledge of the family; a typical ploy. In the opening sentence, Jerome suggests the need for a new approach to an old theme. He looks to the provinces now to maintain his vision for a changed society but that society is on the brink of disaster.\textsuperscript{220} He still seeks to use the nobility, albeit a provincial one.

The letter follows a familiar format to a novella.\textsuperscript{221} Ageruchia is cast in the role of the beautiful, rich heroine beset by trials – in her case predatory suitors – just as he portrayed his other leading ladies.\textsuperscript{222} But now the Church is strong and can protect her from importunate suitors.\textsuperscript{223}

Abounding in abstruse references to the rejection of digamy, even among the pagans, and with allusions to Virgil and an apposite quote from Ovid on the flirtatiousness of

\textsuperscript{214} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 188.1. See 162 above.
\textsuperscript{215} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.1. See also \textit{Epp.} 54; 75; 79.
\textsuperscript{216} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 23.17.
\textsuperscript{217} Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 127.17; 130.6.
\textsuperscript{218} See 59 above.
\textsuperscript{219} See the letters to Furia (54) and Demetrias (130).
\textsuperscript{220} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 123.16.
\textsuperscript{221} See 131–3 above.
\textsuperscript{222} Eustochium, in Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 22.3; Demetrias, in 130.5ff.
\textsuperscript{223} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 123.2.
women, it contains a long theological argument based on 1 Tim 5.14, ‘volo ergo iuveniores nubere filios procreare matres familias esse nullam occasionem dare adversario maledicti gratia’ (‘So I would have younger [widows] marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us’).

This learned treatise by Jerome exhibits his credentials as the expert on Scripture and classical learning. These credentials are necessary, since the women of Gaul can only know him through his letters, in contrast to his Roman circle. Once again, his treatise pays tribute either to the learning of the recipient or what she may become. But it is a different genre from that of the older widows. They make their choices on the basis of past experience with his scholarship. Young widows must be persuaded and pastored.

Cain says of Jerome’s letters that:

> We see their author most deftly reinventing himself to accommodate the ever-changing demands made upon him by an ever-changing audience.

This letter lacks the scatological humour and bite of his earlier attacks on worldly women and clergy. This defence of celibate widowhood is the longest, most sustained theological argument in Jerome’s work and attempts a biblical theology of monogamy. We see an episcopal gravitas about this work, where the satirical flourishes are muted, presenting a different persona from that of the fulminating prophet from the desert. He refers Ageruchia (and therefore other readers) to his masterwork on celibacy, *Contra Iovinianum*.

Jerome uses the parlous state of the Empire now to heighten the sense of danger and the need for the widow to remain celibate as ‘Quis hoc crederet … Romam in gremio suo, non pro gloria, sed pro salute pugnare’ (‘Who would have believed it … Rome fights within her borders not for glory but her very life’).

He shows a pastoral concern to those well-born women, offering at least the certainty of salvation through the ascetic way, if not personal safety. At its worst, this may be viewed as playing upon the vulnerability and fears of the women. But in the light of the discussion on Letter 117 above, I suggest that one of Jerome’s motives was to provide genuine hope to the

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224 Jerome, *Ep.* 123.4; Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 3.2.83.
225 Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, 3
women in the provinces, now under constant threat. Jerome was utterly sincere in what he taught about salvation and the certainty of Christ’s eternal kingdom. He had based his whole life on his belief that the ascetic way was the only hope for Rome and now the provinces. In the same way, he had struggled against the tide with his translation and exegesis.

The tone and persona of this letter are much gentler. Jerome is not the importunate client striving for status so much as the understanding, authoritative pastor to the neglected. In the end, though, Jerome was not entirely successful in Gaul, but then, that was hardly unusual for Jerome.

**Jerome’s Preference for Widows**

The mature Christian women of Rome who were part of Jerome’s coterie did not owe their initial Christian and secular learning to Jerome. They did not even owe their ascetic piety to him. But he did seek, wherever he wrote, to challenge the minds and expand the horizons of women in the same way as he challenged his male correspondents. For women, asceticism became more than fasting, prayer and isolation from the world. Jerome sought to fashion minds that were diverted from the concerns of marriage and procreation and were undividedly fixed on Christ through the study of the Scriptures. He did not believe that women’s intellects were weak, but rather that they were inhibited by the curse of Eve. In widows, Jerome saw women set free from what he regarded, with an unexpected sympathy, as the disadvantages of marriage, where in the past these had been seen entirely from a male perspective in satirists such as Horace and Juvenal.

Jerome based his appeal to these women on the strong sense of elitism in the *nobilitas*, promising them *gloria* and philosopher status. He would have had little experience with women of this class prior to his second time in Rome. It is doubtful that his classmate Pammachius took him home to meet the female members of the family. This is perhaps why his early letters are so awkward and self-promoting, to impress these women of rank. Later, with older widows, he saw himself as more of a friend than a client. He

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231 See 13, 116 above.
achieved this friendship with Paula. But in the case of Marcella, I have argued, she recognised and exploited his gifts to her own ends, while recognising his worth.

Jerome’s letters to widows trace the vicissitudes in his own life, his constant need for financial support and encouragement, his commitment to asceticism and his unpopular views on translation and exegesis. He had always sought to bring about change in Rome through his asceticism and particularly the study of the Scriptures. Bethlehem consumed his energies in his outpouring of work, but in later years something of his vision returned, as he saw the Scriptures and the ascetic commitment to them as the only hope in a crumbling world. He never ceased to be sensitive to criticism but as he assumed the role of *paterfamilias*/bishop to widows, his writing lost its harshness, a reflection of the agency of the women in providing intellectual satisfaction and loyalty.
Chapter 7: Jerome’s Women: Creating Identity and Fashioning Scholars

Jerome represented himself as martyr-saint, biblical scholar, translator of Scripture, ascetic-mentor, _paterfamilias_, defender of orthodoxy, social reformer, quasi-bishop and the inheritor of the mantle of Moses and Paul. We have seen how the misogyny of his texts attracted vigorous feminist critique.¹ Andrew Cain’s employment of epistolary theory identified the competitive nature of Jerome’s writing to establish himself as the premier ascetic mentor and the promoter of a new Scriptural exegesis, dependent on _veritas Hebraica_. While I have drawn on the work of these scholars, I have attempted in this thesis to suggest a more complex understanding of the letters in terms of Jerome’s identities and his attitude to women.

Creating Identity

Like Pliny, Jerome exploited the epistolary genre by creating a variety of identities through his correspondence with women. Both men sought fame in demonstrating a life well lived.² Jacqueline Carlon’s examination of Pliny has provided the framework for the exploration of Jerome’s letters, while taking into account the latter’s theological and eschatological views. Since Roman education and societal norms remained conservative among the upper echelons of Roman society, a comparison between the two men is reasonable. However, Jerome’s social and theological concerns lead him to make novel points about women and reconfigure the traditional _cursus honorum_ for them.

Living down the past

Jerome created a persona of ultra-orthodoxy but like Pliny, he had a past to overcome.³ He burst upon the Roman scene in 382, representing himself as the Latin Origen and demonstrating a commitment to the _veritas Hebraica_.⁴ His translation of Origen’s commentary on the _Song of Songs_ underpinned _On Virginity_, the treatise he dedicated?

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¹ See Mary Daly, _The Church and the Second Sex_ (New York: Beaconsfield Press, 1975), 23. See above at 33.
² See Ch. 2 above.
³ See 47–51 above.
to Eustochium, and established his scholarly reputation. When Origen’s works were declared heterodox, Jerome repudiated Origen’s *On First Principles*, but not his exegetical practices. I have accepted Cain’s argument that Jerome used the *epitaphia* to Paula and Marcella to demonstrate his influence on them but I have argued that Jerome was also defending his claim to orthodoxy. Marcella is depicted as saving Rome from the circulation of Origen’s *On First Principles*; the saintly Paula called on Jerome for deliverance from her Origenist inquisitor. Similarly, in his letter to Demetrias, he establishes a link between the teaching of Pelagius and Origen, indicating that he was still affected by the past.

Other features in Jerome’s past necessitating a burnishing of his orthodox credentials included his ordination by a schismatic bishop and his departure from Rome.

**Pastor of a New People**

Jerome was adept at creating a persona for the occasion. In Letters 117 and 130, he claims his exile resulted from his exposure of Rome’s sins. In an original piece of exegesis, I have demonstrated that Jerome’s grandiose claim for his work – ‘the book remains’ – is more than an allusion to Pliny. Jerome is declaring a New Testament endorsement for asceticism and his leadership. Cain and Jacobs perceive Jerome’s self-likening to Moses and Paul as a means of validating his authority. However, I propose that just as Moses and Paul were the primary writers of the old and new dispensation, chosen for the formation of a new people, Jerome, too, is seeking to create a new ‘angelic’ people through a discourse of which Jesus is the progenitor. Paul provides the model for his mentoring of women. Through the recurring motif of suffering for the cause of asceticism, he positions himself in the line of Scriptural types who have suffered rejection like Moses, Paul and, especially, Jesus. Jerome, too, suffers

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7 See 50-1 above.

8 Jerome, *Ep.* 127.7; 108.23.

9 See 8; 13–16 above.


12 Mark 13.31; Lk 21.32–3.


14 For Moses, see Ex 19.4–6; for Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, see Gal 2.7–8; Jerome, *Ep.* 22.21.

15 Rom 16.12; 17–19.
in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry and faces rejection for the sake of the ‘truth’.  

**Jerome: The Architect of a New Rome**

As the city of Rome’s past glory diminished, Jerome represented himself as the messenger of a revitalised Rome, predicated on the ascetic life which would be fully realised at the return of Christ. In Jerome’s imagining, Heaven would be a glorified and transformed Rome, populated by the Roman elect and people from the Scriptures. Jerome provided a socio-political and ecclesial discourse countering the old order where the prominent men of the great houses asserted their domination through wealth, and military prowess. Fame and honour would instead rest on a young, virgin woman and the redistribution of wealth in support of the ‘poor’, most particularly those ascetics engaged in biblical scholarship. In this rhetorical reconstruction, society would be united by a pure Church symbolised by the young virgin, free from the corruption of ‘the world and the flesh’. He further seeks to bring about change by employing Rome’s literary canon to diminish the old order and re-write its future in the language of Virgil, where celibate women are the heroes of a future Rome.

Jerome’s quest to articulate the place of the city of Rome and the eternal city has been overshadowed by the theological brilliance of Augustine’s ‘City of God’, and reinforced by Hans von Campenhausen’s dismissal of Jerome’s theological competence. While acknowledging that Augustine’s project in political theology is enduring and unique, I have indicated that Jerome attempted to produce a biblical theology, beginning with the Garden and ending with the triumph in the heavenly Jerusalem. His project resonates with many of the concerns Augustine would explore in greater detail and theological vigour. Jerome’s theology of Mary recapitulating Eve, as head of a celibate race of women delivered from the curse of the Fall, underpinned his argument for a new society. Through celibacy, both men and women were restored to the image of God. Jerome regarded children and family life as components of the material blessing of the Old Covenant that have now been spiritualised and transmuted under the New Covenant. Jerome’s transformation of Rome begins with the *nobilitas* where he seeks

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16 See 113 above.
17 See 122–3 above.
20 Jerome, *Ep*. 22.21. See also 84 above.
to redefine certain social norms such as marriage, family, (especially the domain of the *paterfamilias*) wealth-distribution, gender relations, and scholarship so that they presage the ‘angelic life’ of heaven.

Jerome represented himself as the consummate rhetorician and *litteratus*, the accomplishments of an expensive education, in company with the *nobilitas*. This thesis’ identification of Jerome’s counter-cultural employment of the literary canon and rhetoric, the signifiers of classical Roman pride and elitism, revises opinion on Jerome’s attitude to women. Jerome adopted a revolutionary persona as a *scriptor de scripturis sanctis*, where his commentaries and translation generally exhibited a more restrained, simple style.\(^{21}\) In lavishing his learning and skill on promoting asceticism and in fashioning women scholars, I submit that he demonstrated his self-abasement as a Christian, ostentatiously rejecting the application of these skills in the normal civic and political pathways that they opened for him.

Second, his letter to Damasus and later to Magnus on the use of pagan literature by Christians is central to understanding the perceived ambiguity of Jerome’s attitude to the classics.\(^{22}\) Taking the image of the captive maiden from Deuteronomy 21.10–13, Jerome advocated the employment of classics, shorn of the dangerous attractions of their world-view and employed for ascetic purposes.\(^{23}\) He drew on the misogynistic exercises of the philosophers and the rich literary source of satire and farce to create a sense of superiority in ascetic women, over and against their carnal sisters.\(^{24}\) His education, he claimed, enabled him to recognise sophistry, error and poor style.\(^{25}\) His abundant use of classical allusion in his treatises promises a polymath mentor, in the style of the classical philosophers, but one who could filter their learning through his Scriptural expertise.\(^{26}\) Most commentators draw attention to Jerome’s abundant use of the classics, but are generally content to focus on philological concerns, without commentating on his purpose.\(^{27}\) I have expanded Thierry’s identification of the

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\(^{22}\) Jerome, *Epp.* 21; 70; and 22.29.


\(^{24}\) See 92–101; 177ff. above.

\(^{25}\) See Jerome, *Epp.* 130.17; 53.7; 66.9.

\(^{26}\) See in particular his letters to Eustochium (22); Furia (54); Demetrias (130).

\(^{27}\) See the prolific philological studies of Adkin: Neil Adkin, *St Jerome on Virginity: A Commentary on the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Letter 22)* (Oxford: Francis Cairns, 2003). Focus has also rested on the dream sequence and whether or not Jerome really gave up the classics. See also H.
similarities in form between the judgment tribunal of King Radamanthys and Jerome’s appearance before the judgment seat of Christ. This represents a sophisticated use of poetic forms to contrast the despair in Virgil’s Underworld, underpinned by myths and Hellenistic philosophy and Jerome’s own (Christian) deliverance.²⁸

Jerome: Client or Friend?

The letters of Pliny illustrated the negotiation of status.²⁹ The fourth century saw the patronage of bishops and holy men added to this jockeying for status.³⁰ Jerome inserted himself into this latter category.³¹ Jerome’s circulation of ‘letters of reproach’ effectively introduced the ‘holy man of the desert’ to the noblewomen of the Aventine.³² As a result of his alleged wilderness experience, he felt qualified to castigate the vanities of the Christian nobilitas of Rome and see off other mentors. I have proposed that Jerome has such a high regard of his scholarship, ascetic vision and his role as the leader of a new ‘angelic’ people, that it transcended rank.³³ Yet he depended on female patronage to finance his scholarly pursuits. Jerome sought to narrow the status-gap by employing letters of shared experience.³⁴ While Jerome’s reputation as a mentor was enhanced by the piety and learning of his patrons, as shown in his letter to Asella, his dependence on her patronage becomes clear in Letter 45.³⁵ Contentious Christian scholars could not afford to be adrift in the Roman world without the protection of patronage. Yet, though he was constrained by the connotations of amica, Jerome aspired to the status of friend.³⁶ I will return to the topic of patronage below to show the agency that the women exercised through it.

²⁸ See 119–20 above.
²⁹ See 51–2 above.
³⁰ See Peter Brown, Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 45–6, 102; see also Pauline Allen, Bronwen Neil and Wendy Mayer, Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 35–8. I take it that both bishops and holy men dispersed largesse but that the rich also contrived to hold onto their money and to rationalise their giving to the poor.
³¹ See 207ff above.
³³ See 12; 56; 58; 160 above.
³⁶ See 35–6; 221 above.
**Paterfamilias or quasi-Bishop?**

In Chapter 4, I demonstrated how Jerome sought to deliver the Aniciae from dependence on male family members for their glory. Jerome was not really interested in defining the role of a Christian *paterfamilias* for other men, but I have argued that he sought to imitate the holy family by ‘living as the angels’ with Paula in Bethlehem.\(^{37}\)

I have expanded Cain’s portrayal of Jerome as the paramount ascetic expert to argue for Jerome’s perception of himself as a quasi-bishop to widows. His assuming the mantle of the Apostle Paul morphed into the role of apostolic successor/bishop. Just as Paul pastored a global flock by letter, so also did Jerome.\(^{38}\) In Jerome’s theology of episcopacy, a bishop differed from a presbyter in the New Testament only in occupying a see.\(^{39}\) In this period, the nature of episcopacy was still fluid. Yet Augustine’s defensiveness in including the works of Jerome (a mere priest) in his written attack on Julian suggests that bishops were beginning to see theological authority resting in their position.\(^{40}\) Jerome, himself longed for recognition as both a scholar and defender of orthodoxy that went with, at least, being considered worthy of the role of a bishop.

Jerome’s diminishing patronage base necessitated he find a role through which he could initiate contact with wealthy widows. In an exegesis of Letter 117, I have argued that Jerome represented himself as bishop, demonstrably superior to the present incumbents, first through the convention of a *recusatio* and then through his pastoral and ascetic skills.\(^{41}\) Furthermore, ascetics were increasingly deemed worthy of episcopacy; he had once been mooted as pope for Rome.\(^{42}\) But he had too many scandals and enemies to ever aspire to more than a quasi-episcopacy.

**Jerome’s Women – A Reframing**

The title of this thesis, ‘Jerome’s Women’, raises the question of his control over them. I have accepted the view that ‘men write women’, in demonstrating how Jerome ‘wrote’ women to promote his various personae. But I have challenged the poststructuralist view that nothing can be known of the women or of Jerome’s agency.\(^{43}\) Clark indicated

\(^{37}\) See 195–7 above.

\(^{38}\) See 161 above.

\(^{39}\) See 207ff. above.

\(^{40}\) See 238 above.

\(^{41}\) See 235–8 above.

\(^{42}\) See 12–13 above.

\(^{43}\) See 123ff.; 162ff.; 212ff.; 216ff. above.
that the rejection of ‘subjects’ by the poststructuralists led to the loss of agency and thereby change and causality.\textsuperscript{44} If this is so, then the tools for studying history are seriously diminished.

To address this problem, I adopted Spiegel’s theoretical construct of ‘social logic’, applying it to the women’s local culture in an effort to demonstrate their agency in the social institutions of marriage, mechanisms of wealth distribution and associated patronage structures, the employment of the literary canon, the conventions of rhetoric, and gender relations among the Roman elite.\textsuperscript{45} In this examination, Pliny’s taxonomy of a \textit{cursus honorum} for Roman women (betrothed, matron and mature matron/widow) was employed heuristically.

I have also attempted to reframe the perspective of feminist writers such as Clark, Shaw, Cooper, Kraemer and Cox Miller on Jerome’s perceived misogyny that disregards wider socio-political, ecclesial and eschatological issues. A tendency to proof text overlooks evidence of the wider context, especially the nature of rhetoric.

**Eustochium, the Betrothed**

Familial and paraenetic, Letter 22 is conventional in exhorting perseverance in the life of the dedicated virgin, setting out rigorous guidelines for an enclosed life.\textsuperscript{46} Jerome’s precepts are distinguished by frequent recourse to Galen. These reveal ‘the relationship between diet, digestion, the humours, and sexual desire in male and female bodies’.\textsuperscript{47} Learned expositions on a plethora of topics introduce Jerome, the polymath, whose expertise covers every area of learning and its effect on behaviour. He adopts Origen’s philosophical approach both to writing biblical commentaries and in his letters.\textsuperscript{48} Yet Jerome follows Pliny and the classical model that the bride (of Christ) should honour her husband in the way she conducts herself.\textsuperscript{49} The true Christian lives ‘as the angels’,

\textsuperscript{44} Clark, ‘“Holy Women, Holy Words”,’ 420. For the importance of causality and change for the historian, see 26 above.
\textsuperscript{45} See 77; 100ff.; 114; 130-33; 161; 172 above.
\textsuperscript{46} See 61–3 above.
\textsuperscript{47} Teresa M. Shaw, \textit{The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 44.
\textsuperscript{48} See 175 above.
\textsuperscript{49} See 61–3; 75 above.
preparing for the return of the Christ. In Jerome’s theology, the ‘flesh’ is reduced to sexual desire that negates whole-hearted devotion to Christ.

This thesis also argues that Jerome’s theology of asceticism claimed to liberate women from the curse of Eve, namely, childbirth and male domination. This was in addition to Christ’s deliverance of humanity, as a second Adam. In this, I have challenged the views of Shaw and Jacobs who perceive men as not engaging women in the askesis of asceticism. Jerome, like the classical philosophers, and Moses and the Apostle Paul, provides a basis for praxis. He expanded the role of Mary as Eve in the salvific narrative beyond that of his contemporaries, employing the semiotics of soul/virgin betrothed/church to relate the virgin typology to the Church, the Christian soul and his own soul. With rhetorical skill, he applies the words of Psalm 45, the ‘wedding’ Psalm, and the Song of Songs to Julia Eustochia, making her a living metaphor. Her faithfulness and perseverance reflected the well-being of the Church.

This heady destiny for a young woman at the bottom of the hierarchy of the nobilitas signified Jerome’s overturning of ambitions for political success to enhance the reputation of the clan. Money is now expended on the scholarly poor who labour over the Scriptures so that the virgin betrothed might give herself to diligent study of the Bridegroom’s words and prayer. In a similar way, Pliny’s young wife reflected her allegiance by learning his works by heart. Thus Jerome reinterpreted rather than destroyed Rome’s cultural norms of devotion.

Jerome emerges as a scholarly enfant terrible showcasing his learnedness, pillorying the laxity of the Christian nobility and clergy. He is a martyr and Christ-like figure, purified from his desert experience. Cox Miller argues that Eustochium becomes Gubar’s ‘blank page’, where her sexuality is extinguished by the intensification of the erotic that is then re-written in the tropes of the Song of Songs. I have argued that the erotic, expressed in the context of marriage, represents for Jerome human experience at its most intense and his longing for the consummation of all things. Moreover, the fear of

50 Jerome, Ep. 22.21; Lk 20.34–6.
51 See 61; 187 above.
52 See 76; 139; 155 above.
53 See 79 above.
54 See 64 above.
55 See 113–14 above.
57 See Jerome, Ep. 21.17; 104 above.
loss, entailed in the erotic imagery of the *Song of Songs*, functions as a remedy for apostasy in the Church.\(^{58}\)

The visit of the Lord to Eustochium in her bedroom has disconcerted scholars, but not Jerome’s contemporaries.\(^{59}\) I have suggested that the scene is removed from reality through the tropes of the *Song of Songs*. Both women are dreaming. Eustochium has fallen asleep, reading Scripture and praying. Her reading interprets the experience of the encounter with the Bridegroom.\(^{60}\) The importance of the language of Scripture to control thoughts to bring about changed behaviour is a recurring theme in Jerome’s letters.\(^{61}\) Moreover, dreams signified in the ancient world a divine visitation, rather than an expression of the psyche.\(^{62}\) When the ‘dream’ is seen in a cultural context, the focus shifts away from Eustochium’s ‘real’ body. She becomes an allegory not only for the destiny of a faithful Church, but also the individual soul’s final bliss. Christ comes to an undefiled Church (symbolised by the Bride of the *Song of Songs* and also Eustochium) when ‘she’ is praying and reading the Scriptures. The Church is in greatest danger when ‘she’ seeks the ‘Groom’ outside the written word.\(^{63}\) Thus the incident reflects Jerome’s eschatology of looking forward to a consummation. The Bridegroom will return to the Church and the individual soul, both of whom are found prepared.

Further, the incidents of the memory and the dream represent more than Jerome’s struggling with his own carnality.\(^{64}\) They are an assertion of his authority in that he has conquered the flesh in the wilderness and has thereby been given a taste of the heavenly life. He presents asceticism as the new martyrdom, for like Christ he has been beaten and resisted Satan in the desert, and has pleaded the martyr’s testimony, *Christianus sum*, before the tribunal.\(^{65}\)

All the seductions of Jerome’s desert experience are a symptom of the great sin of a ‘divided heart’. Eustochium is being challenged to participate in his heroic struggle for sanctity where, like a new Moses/Christ, Jerome shows the way.\(^{66}\) Jerome’s writing of

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\(^{58}\) See 106 above.

\(^{59}\) See 103-4 above.


\(^{61}\) Hence his emphasis on *lectio divina*, 104 above.


\(^{63}\) *Song of Songs*, 5.7; Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 54.

\(^{64}\) See Jerome, *Epp.* 22.7; 22.25 respectively.

\(^{65}\) See Adkin’s argument, 114 above.

\(^{66}\) See 110 above.
Eustochium in this thesis is not to eradicate her as a female, but to place her centre stage in a radically counter-cultural alternative to the traditional life mapped out for a young, aristocratic girl, awaiting the reflected glory of a husband’s political career. She has fame in her own right surpassing that of her mother and married sisters, and even the male heroes of Rome.

Jerome’s concern for authority and orthodoxy based on Scripture is demonstrated in his description of the orders of monks. This is not gratuitous showing off but underlines Jerome’s concern that monks and virgins live in separation from the world; the monks in the community and virgins enclosed in the city, both taught by those who have the imprimatur of the Church.  

I have claimed a more radical reordering of Roman cultural norms in Jerome’s employment of Cicero, Virgil and Horace in the service of ascetic Christianity. Jerome used the epistolary genre to promote his *veritas Hebraica*, and exegesis of the Scriptures, the great catalyst for change in Rome. Further, the universally admired invective style of Cicero is employed to attack the very institutions that Cicero’s admirers seek to protect. Similarly, Horace’s lyrical style is surpassed by the Psalms and the *Song of Songs*, while echoes of his satire diminish Jerome’s enemies.

Virgil’s works were authoritative for defining Roman values. Jerome assumes the identity of a new Virgil with Eustochium, as a type for all dedicated virgins, the hero of a new epic that leads to a new Rome. Further, Jerome’s use of Virgil resists the perceived syncretism that was characterised by Proba’s *Cento Virgilianus de laudibus Christi*. Rome will have no golden age, only a new, celibate race living as in the kingdom now and hastening its final realisation.

The argument of the thesis draws parallels between Eustochium’s ascetic journey and events from the *Aeneid*, especially in the *topos* of violent struggle common to both. Central to the *Aeneid* is Anchises’ prophecy, an encapsulation of the role of imperial, pagan Rome. Eustochium, the living metaphor of the faithful Church, will also be led in triumph to a new kingdom.  

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67 See 97–100 above.
68 See 114–21 above.
69 See 119 above.
70 See Jerome, *Ep.* 63; 144–6 above.
71 See 121 above.
73 Jerome, *Ep.* 22.30; 122 above.
bride by ‘violence’. In Roman literature, the death of a beautiful woman brings about political change in Rome. Eustochium has to undergo a metaphorical death. She must change from black to white, and subdue her own flesh. In leaving her past life, she has ‘died’, heralding a new Rome.

The letter ends in the transformation of yet another great Roman cultural plot: the triumph; but it is a triumph modelled on Christ’s entry into Jerusalem where Virgilian tropes are entirely absent and a girl, not a general is the subject. Jerome’s alternative life for the young girls of Rome may not appeal to contemporary readers. However, in its cultural context, it promises in the tropes of the Song of Songs that struggle and deprivation will come to a joyous end. Eustochium enters like a queen; her mother and Marcella part of the admiring throng, again a reversal of traditional patterns of honour. She emerges as more than a cipher for Jerome’s religious and sexual longings. Jerome offers her a fame transcending that of the pagan or the worldly Christian male.

Clearly, Jerome ‘wrote’ Eustochium, even when offering her a glorious future, yet there are glimpses of the ‘real’ Eustochium. She must be young, beautiful, rich, noble and scholarly or it makes a nonsense of Jerome’s symbolism and his demand that only great sacrifice is worthy of Christ. Intertextual evidence also provides insights. Eustochium’s present to Jerome for St Peter’s patronal festival, I propose, is the gift of a clever, pious girl in accord with the practices of patronage. Moreover, Eustochium did not live her life in the cubiculum of a Roman palace, but in a monastery hostel, on a busy pilgrimage trail. She and Paula oversaw Jerome’s choice of commentaries, reaffirming their influence. After Paula’s death, Jerome depended on Eustochium who never forgot her own nobilitas. Her letter to Pope Innocent, demanding protection during the Pelagian dispute, proclaimed her a domina of the nobilitas to the end.

Demetrias and the Aniciae

Jerome’s letter to Demetrias lacks the linguistic pyrotechnics of the letter to Eustochium. However, I have argued it is more significant than generally acknowledged. First, it demonstrates Jerome’s final chance to rehearse his vision for

75 Jerome, Ep. 22.1.
76 Jerome, Ep. 22.41.
77 Jerome, Ep. 31.1.
78 Jerome, Ep. 66.3.
79 Jerome, Ep. 130. See 125 above
Rome through the trope of a virgin of the nobilitas. Demetrias was to become the exemplum of asceticism for a new generation. Jerome now looked beyond that city to the Empire, now experiencing barbarian incursions. The letter demonstrates the extent to which Jerome nuanced his vision in accordance with his circumstances and those of his correspondents.

Second, this letter counters the view that nothing can be known of the women to whom Jerome writes, lending itself particularly well to the application of Spiegel’s ‘social logic’. The tension between the negotiation of status and power tested the boundaries of the client-patron relationship. Jerome’s long-term enmity with the Anician clan, only cursorily acknowledged by scholars, provides a backdrop for observing the agency exercised by the women and their shaping of Jerome’s narrative.

Demetrias is seen in the context of a family of powerful women used to exercising political and ecclesial authority, even in Africa, where they had fled after the Visigoth invasion of Rome. The West was now embroiled in its first full-blown heresy, Pelagianism. Like Jerome, Pelagius sought to address ‘moral laxity’ in the Church but he was perceived as advocating human autonomy in matters of salvation. However, Jerome’s motives were mixed. Pelagius, as well as being a gifted exegete and competitor in the arena of ascetic mentoring, advocated a midway position between Jovinian and Jerome.

Jerome’s robust opposition to Pelagius required financial and political backing. He must convince the women that, once again, he is superior to any other contestant. However, his attitude to the family, based on his perception of their compromised Christianity, affects the tone of the letter. It is uncharacteristically tentative, lacking the semiotics, the mordant ridicule and the evidence of intimacy, present in the letter to Eusochium. Jerome is less strident in his dismissal of marriage, as the prestige of the senior Aniciae emanated from their marriages. Nor does he name Pelagius in his assertion of the doctrine of original sin and prevenient grace, since Juliana supported Pelagius. Anician patronage would have been beneficial, yet Jerome faced possible accusations of hypocrisy following his public antipathy to the domus, not least Proba’s

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81 For a nuanced exposition of Pelagius doctrine of celibacy, see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy*, 260ff.
82 His principal supporters had died, 126 above.
husband, Petronius.\textsuperscript{83} Jerome had also published thinly disguised contempt for Betitia Proba’s famous \textit{Cento}.\textsuperscript{84} To obtain patronage, Jerome was obliged to \textit{volte-face}, while not being seen to do so. He compromises by allowing greater latitude in ascetic practice, particularly the disposal of wealth; at other times, he verges on the insulting by omitting Petronius and Betitia Proba from the family tree, and by the \textit{double entendre} of his comments. The solution to Jerome’s dilemma, I have proposed, lies in his recourse to the literature of the past and his promise of his rhetorical and biblical skills. Unacquainted with Demetrias, he writes her into a Christian-classical novella. The \textit{novella} morphs into a \textit{vita} with Demetrias linked to St Agnes, the virgin martyr. Thus, Jerome establishes his doctrine of asceticism as the path to eternal glory, as martyrdom was in the past. News of Demetrias’ dedication is described in Virgilian terms as it spreads throughout the provinces, especially Africa where her chastity brings joy, whereas news of Dido’s passion brought death and war.\textsuperscript{85} Virginity presages the peace and freedom from strife of heaven in Jerome’s eschatology. Further, the interpretation of glory is inverted. Demetrias brings more joy than the victories of Rome’s most famous generals and her illustrious male antecedents.

Jerome extracts the Aniciae from their past. Only Proba’s son, as Demetrias’ father, receives honour, while the famous Petronius and Betitia are passed over. Jerome then writes the older women, especially Proba, into a new \textit{Aeneid} where they assume a glory of their own. Jerome achieved two ends here, I have argued. He showed how the great writers may legitimately be used by Christians. He employed Virgil to celebrate the founding of a new Christian Empire, populated by the celibate. Betitia’s compromised pastiche of Scripture and classical literature that glorified an unchanged Rome is rejected. On the other hand, as a potential client, he deflects the scandal of Proba’s alleged collaboration with the barbarians and corruption of the governor, Heraclian, by incorporating these events into a Virgilian narrative. Therefore, Proba’s actions have shaped the text of the potential client, while disclosing Proba as a capable, even ruthless woman, whose familiarity with the exercise of power brought herself and her dependents safely to the shores of Africa. We may also infer that she knows her Virgil or Jerome’s allusions are wasted.

\textsuperscript{83} See 143ff. above.
\textsuperscript{84} Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 53.7.
\textsuperscript{85} See 128ff. above.
Jerome did not expect his patrons to reduce themselves to penury. Again employing Virgil, he urges Demetrias to refrain from building basilicas and to invest in the voluntary poor, the nuns and monks. Jerome is influenced by the women’s reputation. All he can hope for by now from the nobilitas is celibacy. But when the learned Jerome deals with Scripture, revealing both his rhetorical and Christian education, he becomes both Moses and Paul incarnate, and the equal of the women. He hints that they may hope to have a commentary dedicated to them. In the enormous range of his classical and Scriptural allusions, he presents himself as the polymath philosopher of the past; the equal of any man of their class. They too may attain the status of philosophers under his mentoring.

The independent Aniciae never became Jerome’s women but their seeking him out demonstrated political acumen. Proba had been the author of the letter of approach, while Juliana maintained her support of Pelagius, ignoring Augustine’s warnings against him. I propose that the women, perceiving the danger of supporting an alleged heretic, but reluctant to break the bonds of patronage, determined to have a foot in both camps. This accounts for their willingness to seek Jerome out, despite his former hostility. But Jerome was not altogether without influence. Epigraphic and literary evidence suggests that Proba supported eastern asceticism and Catholic orthodoxy. Demetrias had a reputation for great learning and orthodoxy, but she remained a domina of the old order.

The Matron

Jerome’s theology of liberating women sprang from his reading of Gen 3.16 where his translation of the text emphasised male oppression of women in marriage. Mary in her ante- and post-partum virginity recapitulated celibate women into the new ‘angelic’ race. The kingdom of God was presaged through the presence of the celibate but would come in its fullness when Christ returned. In an exegesis of Letter 1, I have shown how Jerome used the words mulier and muliercula to designate women still

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87 See 156ff. above.
88 See 159–62 above.
89 See 139 above.
90 See 162ff. above
91 Augustine, Ep. 188.1.
92 See 166ff. above.
93 See 84–5 above.
under the bondage of the original curse, but used *femina* to designate martyrs and ascetic women, that is, ‘woman’ as she appears in Gen 1.27; her humanity restored to its divine image.

Married women who lived celibately gained Jerome’s approval. However, Clark’s argument that women must be in a transition to maleness has been rejected as an essentially Gnostic view, discredited by Jerome in his assertion that gender differences would still be present at the resurrection.\(^{94}\) The ‘women becoming men’ motif is typical Hieronymaïc hyperbole, referring to the qualities they may exhibit, when freed from the servitude of marriage and child bearing. Their rational qualities are set free to serve Christ whole heartedly. But as women, they still needed protection, as Jerome demonstrated by entrusting widows to the care of certain priests.\(^{95}\) Jesus and Mary heralded a new celibate race of male and female.\(^{96}\)

With Paula, he set about modelling marriage in its pre-Fall state. Paula was the restored *femina*/Eve, the perfect helper, yet retaining the undivided heart of total devotion to the Lord.\(^{97}\) The Incarnation at Bethlehem was a focus of Jerome’s Jesus-centred piety – the perfect *locus* for a celibate Joseph/Mary relationship.\(^{98}\) Like Pliny’s perfect wife, Paula is the mirror image of Jerome’s interests: her competence in Hebrew, her study of the Scriptures, her orthodoxy, and her rigorous ascetic regime. Yet, she, too, retained her sense of *nobilitas*, organising the convent along the hierarchical lines of Roman society.\(^{99}\) Roman *mores* were always the benchmark, even when Jerome was seeking to redefine them.

**Fashioning Scholars**

I have used the term ‘fashioning scholars’ rather than creating them, because Jerome’s patrons came to him already committed to his rigorous Eastern asceticism and inclined to serious study of the Scriptures.\(^{100}\) Jerome did not perceive his role as bringing people to faith in Christ, nor even to persuade them to follow the ascetic path.\(^{101}\) He sought to

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95 Jerome, *Ep.* 76.3.
97 Gen 2.18.
98 See 195 above.
direct the women to *veritas Hebraica* and meticulousness, both in Scriptural study and ascetic practice.

In this thesis, the way different epistolary genres have been employed to accord with the age of the women has been demonstrated. Virgins and young widows are treated to dramatic treatises where they are at the centre of a heroic narrative, threatened in body and soul. A sense of elitism is heightened by blistering sarcasm directed against women who seek marriage. Under Jerome’s guidance, the celibate will be brought to the heavenly reward of the crown and attain to a degree of learnedness hitherto only possible for men. Jerome’s letters to older women lack both the drama and the rigorous asceticism and almost always relate to theological or exegetical matters.

**Jerome and the Widow – Some New Insights**

Letters to Marcella and Paula, when not related to study, are employed to establish a degree of intimacy. Widows were a source of finance and the manuscripts so necessary for Jerome’s work. Following the barbarian invasions in the East, Gaul and Rome, he initiated contact with widows through letters, spreading his net beyond Rome. However, he faced a problem in his promoting his manifesto for a new Rome, as widows, who did not remarry, already had high status. He recontextualised asceticism by an appeal to elitism. His theology of rewards, based on a somewhat spurious exposition of the ‘Parable of the Sower’, placed widows in the second tier of reward, after virgins. The crowns of the virgins and widows, woven into Jesus’ crown of thorns, signified their incorporation into his death. The celibate would rise with Christ as the new people of God. Jerome’s confident assertion of the reward of the crown of celibacy and his restoration of women into the image of God must have been reassuring, when others, like Ambrosiaster, argued the contrary.

Jerome heightened this sense of elitism by making older widows *exempla* to virgins and men. Therefore, Eustochium’s comfort lay in having her mother’s good deeds recited in Jerome’s *consolatio*. Marcella was held up as an example to young widows and virgins. Fabiola, for her courage, was insinuated into a rebuke to Pammachius.

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102 See accounts of Eustochium, Demetrias and Furia in Chs. 3, 4 and 6 respectively.
103 See 212 above.
106 Jerome, *Ep. 54.18*; See above at 223.
But it was the promise of becoming scholars and philosophers that held the most attraction. The widows of Gaul were promised mentoring beyond anything locally available.\textsuperscript{108} Christianity was democratic in the sense that the study of the Scriptures was enjoined on all.\textsuperscript{109} Widows, in particular, had the opportunity to become as learned as men, while excluded from the schools of rhetoric. Jerome did not differentiate between Marcella and Pammachius or Domnio in the care given to theological argument.\textsuperscript{110} He commends none of his male friends for learning Hebrew, as he commended Paula. Jerome rendered the study of Scripture an elite pursuit for women, as no other patristic writer in the West did. The women exercised choice in how they lived out their asceticism. Even Paula controlled her money. Jerome may have used Marcella to advertise \textit{veritas Hebraica}, but it was Paula who learnt Hebrew. Jerome never offered women the pap suggested by Rufinus, Pelagius and Ambrose.\textsuperscript{111} Moreover, his commentaries, as I have indicated, imitated Origen’s philosophical approach and philosophy placed one in the super scholar class.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Areas for Further Research}

The question of how Jerome used the literature of the past, particularly Virgil, is open to further research. Investigation would move beyond source hunting and extend my analysis of the way in which Jerome reworks concepts and form for a new Rome.

Literary analysis of Jerome’s letters can also be pushed in further directions, hinted at by this thesis. For example, the strongly visual component of Jerome’s writing with his cameos and vignettes are redolent of the theatre. Though Wiesen touches on Jerome’s employment of farce and mime, Jerome’s epistolary rhetoric seems particularly amenable to performance theory, and further work may be able to test the findings of this thesis.

Indignant focus on the excesses of Jerome’s satire against women has been a major deflection from a careful examination of both the context and wider purposes in his

\textsuperscript{107} See 228ff. above.
\textsuperscript{108} See 237–8.
\textsuperscript{110} See Jerome, \textit{Epp.} 84; 97.
\textsuperscript{111} See 154, 227 above.
writing. The revolutionary nature of what he demanded of men has become obscured and therefore suggests a productive area of research and comparison.

The issue of a place for Jerome’s letters rests alongside fertile comparanda, such as Augustine and other contemporary thinkers, including Ambrosiaster and Ambrose, in explorations of late-antique political theology.\textsuperscript{113}

Jerome was not always likeable, so why did his women patrons offer him such loyalty? The opinion of a nineteenth-century divine is unlikely to satisfy feminists:

A man of Jerome’s passionate enthusiasm – whose fervid torrent of language stayed at nothing but swept everything before it, did not influence many strong men of calm judgment, save that as a scholar and critic he won their admiration of his lively wit and brilliant learning; but with many of the ladies of Rome, his enthusiastic temperament and burning eloquence produced most marvellous results.\textsuperscript{114}

Many of Jerome’s women manifested the qualities that Drury attributes to men, shrewdly managing their estates and Jerome’s excesses. Palladius, no friend of Jerome, hinted at a kind of domestic abuse in Jerome’s relationship with Paula.\textsuperscript{115} Yet her son sent his daughter to take her place. I have suggested a reason for the Aniciae to contact Jerome in the face of his insults, but the ambiguities of Letter 130 are open to deeper consideration.

The question of what women saw in Jerome still remains. What common factor made sophisticated and educated women seek him out? Where did their strong foundation in the classics and Scripture come from? Was this linked to the earlier salon culture that was interested in literature and philosophy? Taking seriously Jerome’s acknowledgement of his female correspondents’ intellectual capacities suggests further lines of thinking about Christian appropriation and use of classical paideia. Jerome unsuccessfully sought friendship with Marcella; the Aniciae rejected him; the dominae of Rome chose what they would from his mentoring. Jerome exploited his relationships with women to create his reputation and promote his scholarship, but as his fortunes


\textsuperscript{115} Palladius, Hist. Laus. 36.6–7.
fluctuated, his emotional and financial dependence was such that this thesis might equally be entitled: ‘The Women’s Jerome’.
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