

Article

Textual Transmission and the Construction of Spiritual Authority: The Early Reception of Jerome of Stridon

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Abstract

The life of Jerome of Stridon (d. 419/420), who was regarded as a father of the church and one of the most important authorities in the Middle Ages, has often been depicted as highly controversial: In modern reconstructions, Jerome is typically described as an outsider, constantly involved in controversies and frequently criticized and questioned by his contemporaries. This begs the question of how Jerome could have received such an esteemed reputation during the following centuries. While it has been acknowledged in previous scholarship that Jerome had an extensive reception in the Middle Ages, a comprehensive study of the transmission of his works in the first centuries after his death has not been undertaken. Likewise, the mechanisms involved in constructing an image of Jerome as an authority of exegesis and asceticism and as a defender of orthodoxy are yet to be studied. Combining philological and historical approaches, the present article seeks to contribute to Hieronymian scholarship by studying the reception of Jerome during his lifetime and during the first centuries after his death, taking into account two different but interrelated aspects of this reception: First, an analysis of manuscripts will answer questions concerning the transmission of Jerome's texts. Secondly, the article will consider the earliest reception of Jerome's works and how this was managed by Jerome himself, in collaboration with his friends and patrons, in addition to how he was commonly referred to and described during the first decades after his death. The article examines how these aspects of reception contributed to the creation of an image of Jerome, and an interpretation of his work that would become important in medieval Christianity.



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1. Introduction

Jerome of Stridon was one of the most important theological authorities in the Middle Ages, regarded as a father and a doctor of the church together with Augustine, Ambrose and Gregory I. How did he—who, unlike the other three, was not a bishop and who is typically presented as having been a controversial figure—gain such a high status? While Jerome's reception in later times has been thoroughly studied (e.g., Rice 1988; Vessey 1994; Bietenholz 1989; Hamm 1990),¹ research about his earliest reception is rather scarce. Even though previous scholarship has pointed to the importance of his own propagandistic strategies² and certain aspects of his reception in antiquity have been treated (e.g., Mathisen 2009; Driver 1997),³ a comprehensive study of the different factors that contributed to the construction of his authority—during his own lifetime as well as after his death—is yet to be undertaken.

The present article aims to contribute to such an examination by applying a broad methodological approach, taking into account the reception of Jerome in his own time as well as the transmission of his works in the next few centuries. In paying attention to the textual transmission of Jerome's work, the article places itself within the field of *textual culture*, which means that it takes into account "the material processes and ideological formations surrounding the production, transmission, reception, and regulation of texts" (Bray and Evans 2007, p. 1). This approach relies on an understanding of authority as constructed and ideology as formulated in material, and specifically textual, processes and through "discourses as practices";⁴ that is, the social contexts in which texts and ideas are produced and maintained by people through relationships and practices. Asking questions about how Jerome's works were disseminated, which of his texts were most common in the early medieval manuscripts, and how he was written about by contemporary and later church authorities, the article examines how these aspects of reception contributed to the creation of an image of Jerome that would dominate in medieval Christianity; that is, of Jerome as an unquestionable authority, an expert on the Bible and a defender of orthodox Christianity. While it is common in historical reconstructions of Jerome's career to emphasize the controversial aspects and the contemporary opposition against him,⁵ this article will suggest a more nuanced description of his contemporary reception, arguing that Jerome's authority and status was generally—and increasingly—accepted already during his lifetime.

The study begins with an analysis of the appearances of Jerome's works in manuscripts from the sixth to the eight centuries, including an examination of which texts exist together in these early manuscripts, and we discuss what these observations may tell us about Jerome's own publication strategies. We then continue with a treatment of textual production and dissemination of Jerome's works in his own time, focusing on the role played by his community of readers in managing the spread and the reception of his work. Next, we discuss the importance that Jerome's association with Augustine and his involvement in the Pelagian controversy would have had in building his reputation as an orthodox authority. Finally, we pay attention to how authors in the fourth century referred to Jerome and how he was typically described in these early sources. All these different aspects contribute, we argue, to our understanding of how Jerome could achieve the authority and status that would lead up to his esteem as a doctor of the church.⁶

2. The Evidence from Early Manuscripts and Jerome's Publishing Strategies

Jerome's text production was vast and multifaceted: his 123 letters were spread early on, albeit only in smaller clusters (see further below), including letters that he received, and so were his biblical commentaries, his translations, theological treatises and hagiographic texts. The work by Jerome has been presented in numerous editions ever since the sixteenth century. In medieval Europe, his work was frequently copied in thousands of manuscripts: most of the known manuscripts has been listed by Bernard Lambert in *Bibliotheca Hieronymiana Manuscripta* (Lambert 1969–1972).⁷ In this article, we concentrate on Jerome's reception as it appears in the earliest sources; that is, from the first centuries after Jerome's death.

What work by Jerome is preserved in manuscripts from the first centuries after his death? The number of preserved manuscripts that include texts by Jerome reveals, first of all, the development of the writing support: during Jerome's lifetime, parchment gradually began to replace papyrus. Since parchment was much more durable than the more fragile papyrus, the number of preserved witnesses is significantly higher from the fifth century onwards.⁸ All the same, there is also a big difference when we compare the number of

preserved manuscripts from the first centuries after Jerome's time with the number of preserved manuscripts from the Carolingian time, when the production of parchment increased significantly and the process of copying and circulating texts became a very important part of the activities in the many monasteries that were founded throughout Europe as Christianity spread.

The number of letters by Jerome that are extant in the preserved pre-Carolingian manuscripts is not high: 50 letters occur. Sometimes, only parts or "highlights" from the letters have been included in the early manuscripts. Apparently, letters were circulated in collections from which the copyists made extracts, in the same manner as the sayings of the desert fathers were circulated, to highlight what was deemed to be most important. In the manuscripts preserved from the sixth century, generally only small parts of a few of Jerome's treatises, commentaries and letters are to be found.⁹ In the preserved manuscripts from the seventh century, the impression is similar.¹⁰ From the eighth century onwards, most preserved manuscripts are entire manuscripts, and the reuse of parchment, as palimpsests, does not normally occur anymore.

How well represented is Jerome in the earlier text tradition, in comparison with other contemporary theologians? It is difficult to obtain an overview of this, since information about preserved early manuscripts is to be found in different catalogues. However, there is an opportunity to at least develop a rough estimate by looking at *Codices Latini Antiquiores* ("The More Ancient Latin Manuscripts"; henceforth CLA), a digitized catalogue of a list of early preserved manuscripts compiled by Elias Avery Lowe (Lowe 1934).¹¹ According to CLA, only around 150 manuscripts or fragments of manuscripts are listed from the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. The manuscripts from the fifth century are very fragmentary. From this century, we only find a group of manuscripts containing fragments of Jerome's *Chronicon*.¹²

In the manuscripts from the sixth century, the two dominant church fathers represented are Augustine and Jerome: texts by Augustine occur in 22 of the manuscripts, and texts by Jerome in 16 of them. Other church fathers more frequently represented are Ambrose with texts in eight manuscripts, Hilary of Poitiers in six and Cassian in four. From the seventh century there are somewhat fewer manuscripts that contain work by these authors: texts by Augustine are extant in fourteen of the manuscripts, and texts by Jerome in eight. From this century, there are as many manuscripts (eight) including work by Gregory the Great, seven with Origen's work and five with Eusebius', while there are no witnesses with texts by Ambrose or Cassian. It thus seems that already in the earliest centuries from which we have manuscripts—or parts of manuscripts—that have been preserved, Jerome is almost as frequently occurring as Augustine.

Jerome clearly had a significant reception in the first centuries after his death. To what extent might this have been a result of conscious publication strategies and methods of circulating texts already during his own lifetime? We will come back to the role played by Jerome's community of readers in the next chapter. When it comes to Jerome himself, it is clear that he was a very self-conscious author, both in the way he presented himself and his work and, it seems, in how he managed its publication. In his bibliographical work *On Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*), finalized in 393, Jerome mentions his own work in a way that is revealing for how he would have circulated it (cf. Nautin 1984). *On Illustrious Men* was written at a time when Jerome was in the middle of his life with still thirty years of his life remaining. He added the list of his own work as the last description of the 135 authors who were presented with their bibliographies (cf. Canellis 2020). What Jerome here presented was what he himself considered to be finished, edited publications.¹³ The treatises and letters were listed in chronological order as Jerome had produced them.¹⁴ Apart from the listing in *On Illustrious Men*, which indicated that Jerome was circulating

this work after having revised it for publication, we have no information about whether he was systematically circulating his own work. This, however, seems to be very likely. As we will see in this article, Jerome often referred to the current status of his written work, and to how it was copied and spread.

Can Jerome's publication strategies be seen in the early reception, by looking at which works would have been circulated together in the first centuries after his death? Ralph Hennings has convincingly shown how the manuscript tradition reveals that not only Augustine but also Jerome published his own edited redaction of their mutual correspondence. Their respective edited correspondence is different in both the order of the letters and how they have been edited (Hennings 1994, p. 74).¹⁵ The redaction by Jerome has been widely copied; interestingly, Hennings shows that this redaction is the dominant one in the preserved manuscript tradition compared to the redaction that Augustine published (Hennings 1994, pp. 75–87). Thus, even though there is no indication that the work by Jerome was systematically collected and edited in full in a larger collection during Jerome's lifetime or immediately after his death, such as was the case with other authors (Hennings 1994, p. 66; Hagendahl and Waszink 1989, p. 123),¹⁶ evidently, smaller collections that Jerome had published during his lifetime were prominent in the manuscripts nonetheless.

Further observations can be made from the preserved text witnesses. Early witnesses containing work exclusively by Jerome are particularly interesting since it is probable that they reflect which texts Jerome himself grouped together and published. There are only two witnesses from the first centuries after Jerome's death that contain work only by Jerome. One manuscript is dated to the sixth century (Verona Bibl.Cap. XVII.15.) It contains texts with an apologetic character.¹⁷ First, Jerome's two books *Against Jovinian* along with two letters related to this work (*Letters* 48 and 49); furthermore, *Letter* 61 to Vigilantius, Jerome's treatise against Helvidius, and finally his *Letter* 147 to Sabinianus. This manuscript might be a direct copy of works that Jerome himself grouped together and circulated in the late 390s. The inclusion of the letter against Sabinianus—which has no clear date—could also be explained by the fact that Jerome in this letter distances himself from Sabinianus and his way of life. To distance himself from what could be held against him was as important as to defend his theology against accusations—imagined or real. The other manuscript that contains texts by Jerome exclusively is dated to the seventh century (Lyon m. 602). This mainly includes polemical theological texts. Here, we find Jerome's views on the Pelagians as presented in *Letter* 133 to Ctesiphon and Jerome's *Dialogue against the Pelagians*, along with *Letter* 21 to Damasus in a first codicological unit, and in a second, Jerome's first book against Jovinian.

Other early manuscripts contain letters exchanged between Augustine and Jerome mixed with other work by Augustine primarily. The letters that were exchanged between Jerome and Augustine during the last years of Jerome's life do not seem to have been circulated together as a separate collection, unlike the first part of their correspondence, that both Jerome and Augustine edited for circulation and published in their own redactions. The later part of the correspondence instead circulated as separate letters, that are, however, extant also in early text witnesses, revealing that they were frequently copied even though they were so individually.

There is yet another interesting very old text witness to Jerome's work, today hosted in Naples, which reveals that Jerome might have seen to it that smaller clusters of letters arranged thematically were circulated along with other work. In this manuscript, three previous small books have been identified containing letters and treatises by Jerome with a thematic arrangement (cf. Göransson and Dunn forthcoming).¹⁸

The early text witnesses reveal that Jerome circulated also other letters individually, apart from the ones that he himself listed in *De viris illustribus*: the number of times they

occur in the earliest centuries, relative to the few manuscripts that are preserved as such early text witnesses, indicate this rather clearly (Göransson and Dunn forthcoming).¹⁹ Thus, a first conclusion to draw is that not only did Jerome have a significant early reception, but he was also to a large extent responsible for it. However, this success can hardly be explained only by reference to Jerome's strategies for publication. To disseminate his work and to build his reputation as an author, he was dependent on patrons and friends, and it is to this aspect that we now turn.

3. Dissemination and Reception in Jerome's Reading Community

It is well known that Jerome's community of readers, consisting mainly of aristocratic converts to asceticism (see, e.g., Rebenich 1992; Cain 2009b; van't Westeinde 2021), was instrumental in his literary production, not only by financial support, but also in requesting writings from him and managing their distribution (Williams 2006, pp. 233–60; van't Westeinde 2021, pp. 55–58, 219–38; Canellis 2021).²⁰ Jerome often expressed that his works were written on demand. This was true of his many biblical commentaries, which were dedicated to his readers,²¹ and in his exegetical letters, he provided answers to questions asked by recipients concerning the interpretation of scriptural passages (cf. Cain 2009b, pp. 218–19; Canellis 2016, pp. 56–66).²² His polemical works were, it seems, to a large extent also written to order. This can be said of *Against Helvidius*, in which he discussed the perpetual virginity of Mary, and *Against Jovinian*, in which he argued for the superiority of ascetics (see, e.g., Hunter 2007): In these texts, which were both outcomes of conflicts concerning asceticism, Jerome makes clear that he has written them at the requests of certain "brothers"; that is, fellow ascetics.²³ Something similar can be seen when it comes to works written in the context of the Origenist controversy (see, e.g., Clark 1992), for example, Jerome's *Apology against Rufinus* was written on the initiative of two of his most important patrons, Pammachius and Marcella.²⁴ The polemical work *Against John of Jerusalem* was actually composed as a letter addressed to the senator Pammachius, who had required Jerome to clarify his position in the controversy. In these writings, Jerome did not only defend his own position by explaining his way of relating to Origen's work, but also attacked contemporary "Origenists". Another important example in this regard is *Letter 84*, which was likewise the result of a request from Jerome's patrons: In this case, Pammachius and Oceanus had asked Jerome to explain his approach to Origen.²⁵ Besides producing exegetical and polemical texts that were ordered by patrons, many of Jerome's letters containing advice about the ascetic life appear to have been asked for by the recipients themselves or their relatives.²⁶

Although Jerome's readers certainly had an important role in determining what he wrote, he clearly had his own agenda in producing these works as well, and he, in turn, made use of the authority of his patrons.²⁷ This can be seen as he, in prefaces to commentaries and in letters, defends the more controversial sides of his work, such as his translation projects and his theory of asceticism. In these texts as well as in the polemical writings, he strategically presents himself not only as an expert of exegesis but also as a defender of orthodoxy (Cain 2009b, pp. 43–98). Associating himself with—or *claiming*, to use an expression by Cain²⁸—powerful patrons, not least those who had obtained an air of sanctity, would have been an essential instrument in presenting himself as a reliable authority. That is, while the patrons knew what they sought from Jerome, he knew what he expected from them as well.

There are some clues in Jerome's letters about how his writings travelled between members of the reading community, as well as how they were used by them (cf. Canellis 2020). First, it is clear that the readers had an important function in the copying and dissemination of the works. In *Letter 71*, to Lucinius (397), it becomes clear that this Spanish

ascetic had asked for Jerome's works and even sent servants to Bethlehem to make copies (cf. Williams 2006, pp. 241–44).²⁹ Jerome also appears to have expected that members of the reading community would share writings between them, by having them borrowed and copied from each other. For example, in *Letter 126* to the Roman official Marcellinus and his wife Anapsychia (410), he mentions that he has sent two books of the *Commentary on Ezekiel* to the widow Fabiola, and instructs them that if they wish to have copies, they may borrow from her.³⁰ In the same letter, he also mentions his *Apology against Rufinus*, and writes: "I think that your holy father Oceanus has these books in his possession, for they were once published in order to refute the accusations against me in many writings by Rufinus."³¹ In the preface to his *Commentary on Matthew*, he instructs his associate Eusebius of Cremona to give a copy of the work to the virgin Principia when he is in Rome. She has apparently asked Jerome to comment upon the Song of Songs, and Jerome warns Eusebius that if he withholds the Matthew commentary from her, she may likewise keep to herself the work that she has ordered.³²

Jerome actually assumed that most of what he had hitherto published would be available to his letter recipients—or at least he made it clear that his letter recipients should expect his work to be easily available. In *Letter 47*, to Desiderius, Jerome first makes a point of the fact that much of his work has already been published and circulated; because of this, he states, he does not send Desiderius any copies of his work, "so that I do not send works that you already have".³³ After having said that, however, Jerome continues with further information about what he has written, and how a list of his publications so far can be found in *On Illustrious Men*, also suggesting that Desiderius can borrow copies of his works from Marcella or Domnio, and finally offering to send him copies himself. Broadcasting that his work is easily and publicly available, even though the continuation of the letter reveals that Jerome realized that they probably in fact would not be that easily available—yet—was yet another skillful way of marketing himself and his work. Making people assume that his work would be publicly available led them to help in making them publicly available. This indeed seems to have been a successful strategy. As Megan Hale Williams has argued: "In a manuscript culture where private circulation was the dominant mode for the dissemination of books, it would have been immensely useful for an ambitious author that a register of his works should be in circulation" (Williams 2006, pp. 242–43). Williams also comments that it seems "ironic" that Jerome published this catalogue already in 393, making it obsolete (Williams 2006, p. 243). However, there is reason to think that the importance of this catalogue might not have been as high as one would imagine today, since we have seen evidence in the preserved manuscript tradition that Jerome systematically published, and put into circulation, most of his work—at least his letters, and probably other work as well—throughout his life (cf. Göransson and Dunn forthcoming).

Furthermore, there are indications that Jerome had expectations on how his readers would use his works—he seems to have presumed, for example, that recipients of his letters would keep them, read them thoroughly and share them with others. In the letter written to Heliodorus after the death of Nepotian, *Letter 60*, Jerome relates how Nepotian had eagerly asked Jerome to write to him, and when he finally received a "short little book" (*brevi libello*) from Jerome, he is supposed to have acted as follows: "He kept it in his hands, in his sight, his heart and on his lips. He used to unroll it on his couch, and the sweet page often fell to his breast as he fell asleep."³⁴ Jerome also relates that Nepotian read the text aloud (*recitando*) to those who visited him, strangers as well as friends. Something similar is found in *Letter 24*, which contains a description of the virgin Asella. Here, Marcella, the recipient, is asked not to read the letter to Asella herself, but show it to other young women, so that they may imitate this exemplary ascetic.³⁵ Thus, the ascetic ideal expressed in the letter would have served an educational purpose for young ascetics.

When it comes to the reception of Jerome's works, his readers were not only asked to disseminate and to use his writings, but also, in some cases, to protect and withhold them from others. As Andrew Cain has remarked, Jerome's patrons assumed the role of "literary agents" who were expected to defend his work (Cain 2021, p. 56). Jerome sometimes anticipates, in prefaces to his commentaries, that he will be criticized by people who lack understanding. In the preface to his second book of the *Commentary on Hosea*, Jerome describes what we may understand as expectations on his readers: Pammachius, as his patron, has ordered him to undertake this work, and should then also be a patron of the result of this command. He must "... burn with branding iron and crush under [his] foot the viper and scorpion and pass right through Scylla's dogs and the deadly songs of the sirens with a death ear, so that [Jerome] may both hear and know what the prophet Hosea prophesizes."³⁶ Jerome clearly sees his readers as responsible for defending him against his detractors.

Jerome also warns against making his exegesis available to those who will not make correct use of it. In a preface in the *Commentary on Ephesians*, he writes: "Therefore, I ask you who are present [Paula and Eustochium], as well as the holy Marcella, a unique example of widowhood, not to heedlessly hand my little works over to slanderous and jealous persons, and not to give what is holy to the dogs and cast pearls before swine..."³⁷ This self-presentation is typical and often occurring in Jerome's prefaces to biblical commentaries: He portrays himself as a defender of orthodoxy, a prophet of his time, seeking to mediate the divine word to the church but constantly being assailed by opponents.³⁸ Considering how common this self-presentation is in Jerome's writings, it may be argued that it was probably part of a rhetorical strategy; that is, Jerome could have exaggerated the opposition against him. Certainly, he did suffer criticism—for his translation projects (Cain 2009b, pp. 43–67),³⁹ his theology of asceticism (Hunter 2007, pp. 188–92, 230–42; Evans 1968, pp. 26–42), his use of Origen's work (Clark 1992, pp. 121–51; Evans 1968, pp. 6–25),⁴⁰ and even his behavior (Cain 2006).⁴¹ This being said, there is no reason to assume that Jerome was under more severe attack than some other theologians at the time, and we ought to be careful with accepting as historically accurate what may be rhetorical exaggerations.⁴² Theology was, in this period, very much a polemical enterprise, and anyone engaged in controversy ran the risk of being branded as a heretic by his opponents. Although it may seem contradictory to present oneself as more criticized than one actually is, Jerome did this in such a way that he appeared as a confessor of the true faith in the face of evil, as a never yielding combatant of orthodoxy—a strategy which, as we will see, reached its culmen in the context of the Pelagian controversy.

It was not only Jerome himself who was concerned about the reception of his work, but so were other members of his reading community. An important example is found in the context of the Jovinianist controversy. The work *Against Jovinian* was not well received—it was thought that Jerome, in his defense of virginity, went so far as to disparage marriage. As a result, his patron Pammachius took action to stop the work from being further copied and circulated, which becomes clear from *Letters* 48 and 49, two apologetic letters in which Jerome defended his work. However, as we have seen, *Against Jovinian* continued to be copied after Jerome's death, as were the two apologetic letters—probably because Jerome himself determined to circulate them together with other apologetic texts, as discussed above concerning the sixth century manuscript Verona XVII.15. Again, it becomes clear that Jerome as well as his patrons had their own agendas and acted accordingly, and that he was not completely at their mercy when it came to disseminating his work.

4. Jerome, Augustine, and Pelagianism

There is reason to argue that it was in the context of the Pelagian controversy that Jerome's reputation as an orthodox teacher, which he had been building during his whole career, was solidified.⁴³ While he had emerged victorious from the Origenist controversy and had won the confidence of bishop Theophilus of Alexandria, not everyone was convinced by Jerome's way of explaining and defending his use of Origen. In his *Apology against Jerome*, Rufinus of Aquileia sought to demonstrate Jerome's inconsistency in the matter, and this critique seems to have been brought up anew by Pelagius.⁴⁴ However, it is probable that, with his anti-Pelagian stance, Jerome secured his position in the eyes of posterity. In this regard, his association with Augustine was instrumental.

As we have already seen, Jerome and Augustine wrote a number of letters to each other, and this correspondence began already before the Pelagian controversy. In letters from the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, they exchanged views on scriptural translation and exegesis. Although they disagreed on certain questions, not least the appropriateness of translating the Old Testament from the Hebrew rather than the Greek Septuagint (Fürst 1999; Hennings 1994; White 1990),⁴⁵ a mutual respect can be seen already from the beginning of their correspondence. This letter exchange, that was complicated due to the problems in the delivery of the letters,⁴⁶ was apparently considered very important by both authors already from the start. Even though the letter writing convention stipulated that the writer would include epistolary formulas and adhere to polite convention, many passages in the letters nevertheless resound from what seems to be a genuine appreciation and mutual respect, and both refer to their brotherly love.

Already during their early exchange, Jerome took measures to convince Augustine of his orthodoxy. At this time, the Origenist controversy was still going on, mostly in terms of a quarrel between Jerome and Rufinus. In his *Letter 102* to Augustine, Jerome touches upon the *Apology against Rufinus* which he had recently written. "Calpurnius Lanarius", that is, Rufinus,⁴⁷ is said to have spread writings (his *Apology against Jerome*) which Jerome had replied to in his own apology. It becomes clear from this letter that Jerome had sent a copy of his treatise to Augustine, and he promises that in time he will send a larger work as well. In *Letter 110* in Jerome's collection, Augustine writes that he has not read Rufinus' writings against Jerome, but has read Jerome's reply (*Apology against Rufinus*). Augustine himself does not seem to have given very much attention to this conflict—he mainly laments their lost friendship—but things would turn out very differently during the Pelagian controversy.

Despite their former differences, Augustine turned to Jerome with questions related to Pelagianism, which, of course, says a lot about his respect towards Jerome. In *Letter 131* in Jerome's collection, Augustine relates that he has been visited by Orosius, the Spanish priest who would become a fierce opponent of Pelagianism, and writes that he will send him to Jerome. Orosius had obviously made Augustine aware of theological difficulties in connection to Pelagianism,⁴⁸ and in *Letters 131* and *132*, Augustine explains these to Jerome and asks for his opinion. The first question concerns the origin of souls, and—related to the question of original sin—how it can be explained that human beings are born with guilt. The second question, the theme of *Letter 132*, concerns how James 2.10 should be interpreted: "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." This issue, too, related to Pelagianism, and more precisely the Pelagian view that perfection is demanded from every Christian and that every sin must be avoided.

This was not the first time that Jerome had received questions concerning the origin of souls: In the before-mentioned *Letter 126*,⁴⁹ he responds to Marcellinus and Anapsychia who had asked him concerning this topic. This was one of the contested issues in the Origenist controversy, and Jerome remarks in his letter that Rufinus had expressed erroneous views

on the subject in his apology to pope Anastasius,⁵⁰ to which Jerome himself had responded in his *Apology*. In the same letter, he also refers the couple to Augustine, from whom he suggests that they may learn about the soul directly as he, like they, resides in Africa.⁵¹

Jerome would never give any satisfactory answers to either of the two questions that Augustine had posed. In *Letter 134*, written to Augustine after Jerome had received Orosius in Bethlehem, he explains that he has not had time to reply. However, he emphasizes that he and Augustine are on the same side in the struggle against heresy; he will, he says, “defend your words as my own” and they will together “remove heresy from the church”.⁵² Neither has he been idle in the joint fight against Pelagianism: He mentions the work *Dialogue against the Pelagians* and the fact that he has referred to Augustine in it. This reference is found at the very end of book III, the only place in which Jerome shortly touches upon the question of original sin. Here, he refers to anti-Pelagian writings by Augustine, stating that he has nothing to add apart from what the bishop of Hippo had already written.⁵³

The association with Augustine, who became the main opponent of Pelagianism in the later phase of this controversy, would have been important for Jerome’s legacy as an orthodox teacher of the church. Although Jerome did not have much substantial to say about the origin of souls, Augustine mentioned him in a letter written to Oceanus in 416. He writes that Oceanus in a previous letter to him had quoted from a book by Jerome, but remarks that he already knows “the opinion of the holy Jerome”.⁵⁴ Thus, Augustine claims that he does not understand any better than before, but needs more information: “If you have either read anything by Jerome or heard anything from his mouth, or received anything from the Lord when meditating on this question, by which it can be solved, I ask you to let me know. . . .”⁵⁵ He also asks for a book by Jerome about the resurrection of the body, which Orosius is supposed to have given to Oceanus to copy.⁵⁶ This probably concerns the work *Against John of Jerusalem*, since Jerome developed his anti-Origenist understanding of the resurrection particularly in this work.⁵⁷

In *Letter 144* in Jerome’s collection, a letter from Augustine to Optatus, the bishop of Milevis, Augustine explains that he will not be able to send Optatus the letter that he had written to Jerome concerning the origin of the soul, since he has not yet received an answer from Jerome and does not want to send his own writing without the reply. Jerome, as we saw above, had given a short reply (without discussion the actual question) in *Letter 134*, and in his letter to Optatus, Augustine quotes from this letter: Jerome had stated that he was too occupied with other matters, particularly with refuting Pelagianism (with his *Dialogue against the Pelagians*), but had also written that he and Augustine should stand together in the fight against heresy. At the end of his letter, Augustine advises Optatus to avoid Pelagianism. Also in *Letter 169*, to the bishop Evodius, does Augustine refer to his correspondence with Jerome concerning the origin of souls.⁵⁸

The correspondence with Augustine shows that Jerome assumed an authoritative role in the Pelagian controversy, as a reliable expert on theology. However, when it comes to the formation of the image of Jerome as a protector of orthodoxy, other aspects related to this controversy played in as well, and we should not underestimate the attack by Pelagian supporters on his monastery in 416. If we look at his correspondence from the years before his death, the event takes up an important place. Pope Innocent wrote a letter to Jerome (*Letter 136* in Jerome’s collection) in which he expressed grief over what had happened, but also implied (a not very well-concealed critique against bishop John of Jerusalem) that this could have been avoided: Heresy had not been dealt with properly, but had been allowed to flourish. Jerome, on the other hand, is praised by the pope for his faith.

In letters written by Jerome during this period, the theme of the attack is also brought up, and it becomes yet another piece in the construction of his self-image as an orthodox teacher and a defender of the church. In *Letter 138*, from 417, Jerome writes to Riparius in

Gaul—probably the same Riparius to whom he wrote concerning Vigilantius⁵⁹—praising him for his fight against heresy, but also clearly placing himself on the same battlefield as he refers to the attack by the Pelagians. In *Letter* 139, to Apronius, the attack is again brought up, and this recipient is likewise described as a fighter for orthodoxy in an evil world. In a similar way, *Letter* 141, written in 418, praises Augustine for withstanding heresy and keeping the faith. “. . . all heretics detest you, and they persecute me with the same hatred. . . .”⁶⁰ Finally, in *Letter* 143, to Alypius and Augustine, Jerome writes that he has always loved them, but even more now, because they have managed to put an end to the “heresy of Caelestius”.⁶¹ The image that emerges from this correspondence is of Jerome not only as one of the fighters against Pelagianism and, thus, a defender of the church, but also as one who has suffered severely in the struggle for the truth.

5. Mentions of Jerome by Fifth Century Authors

What can be said of Jerome’s early reception from the mentions made about him in fifth century writings? As has become clear, Augustine regarded Jerome as an authority already at an early stage, and their mutual respect appears to have been strengthened in the context of the Pelagian controversy. However, despite seeing Jerome as a companion in the fight against Pelagianism, Augustine seldom refers to his anti-Pelagian polemics—which is not surprising, considering that Jerome never really provided him with any constructive ideas concerning central questions, such as the origin of souls. However, in Augustine’s writings, Jerome repeatedly plays the role of an orthodox authority agreeing with him. In the work *Against Julian*, for example, Jerome is mentioned among other fathers who have opposed Manichaeism,⁶² and he is also included in an enumeration of orthodox writers concerning the idea of original sin.⁶³ He is said to have fought Pelagianism in the East, as pope Innocent did in the West.⁶⁴ In *On Nature and Grace* (*De Natura et Gratia*), Jerome is again mentioned in a series of arguments from previous authors which pertain to the question of whether a human being can be without sin. Augustine refers to statements by Jerome concerning the possibility for human beings to have a pure heart, and he also refers to an argument for free will.⁶⁵ In *Letter* 148, to Fortunatianus, Augustine refers to Jerome as an authority among others concerning a different theological issue, namely of whether God can be seen with corporeal eyes.⁶⁶ Thus, in the work of Augustine, rather than informing his argument in any significant way, Jerome was used as a theological authority referred to together with other orthodox writers. Neither did the attack on Jerome’s monastery escape Augustine’s attention: In his *On the Proceedings of Pelagius* (*De gestis Pelagii*), Augustine relates how Jerome’s monastery was attacked by Pelagian supporters, and ascribes a particular responsibility to the bishops in the neighborhood to deal with those who are guilty (a critique similar to the one expressed by Innocent in the above-mentioned letter).⁶⁷

Although Pelagianism continued to be discussed in Western Christianity long after Augustine, not least in Gaul, Jerome does not stand out as an important authority in these discussions—at least from what we can tell from the extant writings. Jerome was, however, referred to in a discussion about the nature of the soul between Faustus of Riez (d. ca 495) and Mamertus Claudianus (d. 473).⁶⁸ In a letter, Faustus claims to quote Jerome in an argument for the corporality of the soul. However, the first quotation is not found in Jerome at all,⁶⁹ and the second, from the commentary on Job, does not add much to the discussion.⁷⁰ Mamertus, on the other hand, questions Faustus’ interpretation of Jerome, and sees Augustine as the main authority when it comes to questions of the soul.⁷¹ Thus, despite his involvement in the Pelagian controversy, and the authority ascribed to him by Augustine, it was the latter, rather than Jerome, who was referred to in theological argument. That being said, Jerome’s orthodoxy appears to have been undisputed.

Descriptions of Jerome as an orthodox teacher did not only concern his involvement in the Pelagian controversy. In his *Dialogues*, written in the early fifth century, before the beginning of the Pelagian controversy, Sulpicius Severus rather had Origenism in mind when he described Jerome. He praises Jerome for his faith and his virtues, and writes that "... Jerome ... was formerly thought to have followed Origen, but has now in an outstanding way condemned all of his writings."⁷² Jerome is described as fighting against evil and impiety, and to be hated by heretics for attacking them, as well as hated by clerics for pointing out their faults.⁷³ "... those who think that he is a heretic are insane," Sulpicius states, assuring that Jerome's teaching is orthodox.⁷⁴ John Cassian also joins in the praises of Jerome as an orthodox authority. In his *On the Incarnation*, Cassian refers to arguments from Jerome, a "teacher of Catholics" (*catholicorum magister*), and describes him as very knowledgeable and "of the most pure and approved teaching" (*probatissimae purissimaeque doctrinae*).⁷⁵

Jerome's work *On Famous Men* was continued by Gennadius of Marseilles and published in the later fifth century. Although Gennadius did not write a chapter about Jerome in the catalogue—this, as we have seen, Jerome had taken care of himself—he is mentioned in connection with other writers who are presented. In the chapter on Orosius, we return to the question of the origin of souls: It is written that Orosius was sent by Augustine to Jerome to "learn about the nature of the soul" (*pro discenda animae ratione*).⁷⁶ Apart from Orosius and Jerome's "best pupil", Philip,⁷⁷ Jerome is mentioned in relation to various opponents. In the chapter on Rufinus, it is stated that not only Rufinus, but Jerome too, translated Origen. Jerome is also referred to another time in this chapter, without being mentioned by name: As he enumerates Rufinus' works, Gennadius writes that he "responded, in two volumes, to a detractor of his works",⁷⁸ defending himself but also accusing his opponent of polemicizing because of jealousy. This can hardly refer to anything else than Rufinus' *Apology against Jerome*. The comment is interesting: Gennadius is careful not to write out names, but since it is beyond doubt what he refers to, this statement seems to put Jerome in a bad light, especially as the overall description of Rufinus is very positive. When it comes to two other opponents, Helvidius and Vigilantius, Gennadius is more in agreement with Jerome concerning their standing, and he appears to rely on Jerome's polemics against them.⁷⁹ He also acknowledges Jerome's refutation of them: Concerning Helvidius, it is said that Jerome published a book against him, "filled with proofs from the Scriptures".⁸⁰ In the case of Vigilantius, Gennadius writes more shortly that Jerome responded to him.⁸¹

Jerome is also mentioned in connection to the very first author described in Gennadius' continuation of *De viris illustribus*; namely, James the Wise, bishop of Nisibis. Here, Gennadius notes that Jerome's inability to read Syriac was the reason for leaving this writer out of his catalogue of authors.⁸² It has been argued that Gennadius' representation of Jerome mirrors a less enthusiastic reception of him in Gaul. To some extent, this may be the case—Gennadius would have had plenty of opportunities to enhance Jerome's importance, and his appreciation of Rufinus is interesting to note in this connection. Intriguingly, Gennadius does not mention Jerome's anti-Pelagian efforts, but it might be pointed out that he does not say much about this concerning Augustine, either.⁸³ That being said, Jerome is, after all, seen as a defender of orthodoxy and Gennadius even relies on him in his assessment of certain writers.

Besides being presented as an orthodox authority, Jerome is described by fifth century writers as very knowledgeable and skillful, and as a universally accepted teacher. This is particularly connected to his expertise as an exegete. Severus, in his *Dialogues*, claims that Jerome is "read in the whole world" (*per totum orbem legatur*)⁸⁴ and calls him an expert on the Holy Law (*sacrae legis peritissimus*).⁸⁵ In the *Carmen de ingratis* by Prosper of Aquitaine (d. 455), Jerome is described as a teacher of the whole world (*mundique magister*).⁸⁶ Some

authors particularly mention his language skills: His knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew is brought up by Severus⁸⁷ as well as Augustine.⁸⁸ In the *Chronicle* of Hydatius, bishop of Aquae Flaviae (d. ca 469), Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew is mentioned, as well as his constant meditation on the Scriptures and his large production of texts. Jerome is said to have been "extraordinary in all things" (*praecipuus in omnibus*). Hydatius also brings up his opposition against the Pelagians as well as other heretics.⁸⁹ In one of his letters, the Gallic bishop Sidonius Apollinaris (d. 485) describes Jerome as *instructive* and Augustine as *constructive*.⁹⁰ In another letter, he presents Jerome as an expert in exegesis, as Augustine is in dialectic and Origen in allegory.⁹¹

It was, thus, as a teacher of great knowledge and skill, combined with an impeccable orthodoxy, that Jerome's reputation seems to have been solidified in the fifth century. He appears to have been more of a name to refer to than a constructive thinker put to use in new contexts.

6. Conclusions

Which factors played a part in creating Jerome's legacy, and particularly his reputation as an orthodox authority? The results of this article, which applied a broad methodological approach rather than focusing on one specific aspect of Jerome's reception, point to several interrelated elements. First it must be noted, as previous scholarship has already drawn attention to, that Jerome was a successful propagandist⁹² and took care to distance himself from persons who might have a damaging effect on his reputation, concerning teachings as well as morality. At the same time, he associated himself with those who could contribute to enhancing his authority, not least Augustine. Many of the letters that often occur in the early manuscripts mirror this concern: There are several instances of letters concerning the Origenist controversy, and we have seen that it was important for not only Jerome, but also for his patrons, that he clearly explained his position in this context. His views on asceticism also needed defending, as he did in the works against Helvidius and Jovinian.

In this connection, it must be noted that the propaganda was not only for Jerome's sake, but concerned the reading community as a whole, as these aristocrats sought to extend their influence to the ecclesiastical sphere. They ordered texts against opponents which were then copied and distributed, and they sought to take control over the reception of these texts. Far from being found only in the world of ideas, the making of orthodoxy in antiquity was very practical—it took place in material, textual and social contexts, in which political influence as well as finances were essential. At the same time, as we have shown, Jerome's textual production and dissemination was not only in the hands of his patrons: He himself took measures to control these processes. Thus, we do not completely agree with Williams' statement that "[o]n every level, the initiative seems often to have rested not with the author but with his addressees, whether at the moment of the work's conception or in its later circulation" (Williams 2006, p. 244). The spread and reception of his work must, rather, be seen as a joint effort of Jerome and his community of readers.

We have also argued that Jerome's role in the Pelagian controversy was essential when it came to solidifying his reputation as a defender of orthodoxy. This was the last conflict in which he was involved, and although he would not have managed the transmission of texts produced during this period, his anti-Pelagian stance, his association with Augustine, and the attack on his monastery would have been important in the construction of his legacy. A look at some mentions of Jerome by fifth century writers, Augustine among them, reveals a rather coherent picture: Jerome was described as an authority, as very knowledgeable and, more than anything, as a defender of the true faith and an opponent against heresy. The name of Jerome seems to have been more important than the actual content of his teachings—this is seen not least regarding the question about the origin

of souls, concerning which he had very little to say, but in relation to which he was still mentioned as an authority.

Although Jerome certainly was criticized for his theory of asceticism as well as his approach to Origen, there is little evidence to suggest that there was a massive opposition against him. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that from an early point in his career, he was successful in marketing himself, and that he gained a reputation as an authority early on.⁹³ Thus, rather than looking for a turning point at which a controversial author came to be seen as an authority, we suggest that this should be understood as an achievement resulting from conscious marketing strategies applied throughout his career. The fact that the redacted letters of the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome, which Jerome had been circulating, were in fact even more widely spread during the medieval period than the redaction that had been prepared by Augustine is an interesting aspect (Hennings 1994, p. 105). It reveals how successful Jerome was in his continuous propagation of his own views, and in his self-promotion.

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Notes

- ¹ See selected essays on Jerome's reception in Cain & Lössl (eds.), *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings and Legacy*.
- ² The most important contribution in this regard is Andrew Cain's *The Letters of Jerome*, in which the author highlights Jerome's self-promoting strategies in his letters as an important factor in forming his reputation and legacy. Cain demonstrates how Jerome used letter writing for propagandistic purposes, to attract benefactors and to legitimize his authority as a teacher of exegesis as well as asceticism.
- ³ Studies have been made concerning Jerome's early reception in Gaul; see, e.g., Mathisen, "The Use and Misuse of Jerome in Gaul During Late Antiquity", in Cain and Lössl, pp. 191–208; Driver, "From Palestinian Ignorance to Egyptian Wisdom".
- ⁴ An important theoretician in this regard is Roger Chartier; see his *Cultural History and Order of Books* (Chartier 1988, 1994).
- ⁵ Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, p. 3: "In the final tally, then, the historical Jerome was an extremely marginalized figure in his own time and therefore a far cry from the 'Saint Jerome' construct of medieval hagiography that heavily influenced most scholarly traditions down to the twentieth century and some even down to the present day." (Cf. Cain 2009a), "Rethinking Jerome's Portraits of Holy Women", pp. 47–49.
- ⁶ He was declared doctor of the church in 1295, by pope Boniface VIII.
- ⁷ An important complementary list was later published by (Divjak and Römer 1976).
- ⁸ This is reflected in the lists of preserved manuscripts presented in *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, presented further below.
- ⁹ This concerns fragments of Jerome's commentaries on Isaiah (two manuscripts), on Jeremiah (including the prologue) and on the Psalms, as well as two manuscripts containing his prefaces and translations of the Old Testament. Three manuscripts from this century contain work by Jerome together with other texts: Hieronymus-Gennadius, *De Viris Illustribus*; Augustinus, *De Liber de Haeresibus*, *De Cura Pro Mortuis Gerenda*, *Encheiridion*; Hieronymus, *Epistulae* (221–24)./Hieronymus-Gennadius, *De Viris Illustribus*; Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Vitae Romanorum Pontificum*./Sulpicius Severus, *Vita S Martini*, *Epistulae*, *Dialogi*; Hieronymus, *Vita S Pauli*. An interesting manuscript kept in Naples, however, contains a lot of texts by Jerome; see further below.
- ¹⁰ Jerome's commentaries on Ecclesiastes, on Matthew, on Isaiah and on Jeremiah are preserved in extracts. Moreover, his books *Against Jovinian* and his *Dialogue against the Pelagians* are represented, along with letters. The chronicle by Jerome (and Eusebius) is also represented in two manuscripts. One of these includes both the work *On Illustrious Men*, two chronicles and Vegetius' work on the military life and warfare.
- ¹¹ <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/> (accessed on 5 November 2025).

- 12 Half of the preserved manuscripts contain Christian texts. Apart from the manuscripts containing texts from the Old and New Testament, the following texts are represented: Augustinus: *Opuscula*, *De civitate dei*, *Contra duas epistulas*; (Eusebius) + Hieronymus: *Chronicon* (5 mss), *In Ecclesiasten*; Ambrosius: *De fide* (2 mss), *in Lucam* (2 mss); Maximius: *Contra Ambrosium*; Rufinus: *De benedictionibus patriarcharum*; Lactantius: *Institutio divina* (2 mss), *De opificio dei*; Cyprianus: *testimonia*, *De opere et elemosynis* (2 mss), *De sacramentum calicis*, *Epistulis*; Hilarius Pictaviaensis: *In Psalmos* (3 mss), *De trinitate* (4 mss); Probus: *De catholicis*; Nicetas *De vigiliis servorum dei*; *Fragmentum patristicum* (unknown content); *Gesta concilii Aquiliensis*; *Liber Paschalis*. / Only in one of these mostly only fragmentarily preserved manuscripts there are parts of more than one text in the same manuscript, today hosted by Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (BnF Lat. 8907 (CLA V/572)): Hilarius Pictaviensis *De trinitate*, Ambrosius *De fide*, *Gesta Concilii Aquiliensis*, and Maximinus *Contra Ambrosium*.
- 13 This is indicated by his use of the word *liber* for the two letter collections that are listed. Jerome only used the word *liber* for work that he had finished and had published, as was first observed by Arns (Arns 1953, pp. 18–20).
- 14 Concerning Jerome's letter collections, see Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, pp. 13–19, 68–71.
- 15 See also A. Fürst, *Augustinus-Hieronymus, Epistulae mutuae, Briefwechsel*, FC 41/1 and 2, Turnhout 2003.
- 16 Cf. Augustine's own summary in his *Retractationes*, and then, the collection made after his death by Possidius, and the early posthumous collections of the letter collections of Cyprian (by Pontius) and Ambrose (by Paulinus of Mailand).
- 17 The treatises in question will be discussed further below.
- 18 See Göransson and Dunn (forthcoming), "The Early Text Transmission of Jerome's Letters", for more detailed information about the text tradition and the early circulation of the letters of Jerome including a detailed description of the early Naples manuscript, and the contents of other early manuscripts.
- 19 This is also presented in detail in Göransson and Dunn, *The Early Transmission of Jerome's Letters*.
- 20 Concerning Jerome's readers as a *textual community*, see (Pålsson 2024, pp. 76–78); (cf. Haines-Eitzen 2012, p. 28).
- 21 Jerome dedicated works to certain readers in his prefaces; concerning the function of prefaces, see Cain, *Jerome's Commentaries*, pp. 47–53. The associates to which he dedicated most commentaries were Paula and Eustochium (the commentaries on Galatians, Titus, Philemon, Ephesians, Ecclesiastes, Nahum, Micha, Zephaniah, Haggai; to Eustochium, after Paula's death, the commentaries on Isaiah and Ezekiel) and Pammachius (the commentaries on Obadiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Daniel, the latter to Pammachius and Marcella).
- 22 See, e.g., Jerome, *ep.* 25, 26, 28, to Marcella; 64 and 78 to Fabiola. For a list of these letters, see Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, pp. 218–19; cf. the discussion in Canellis, "Jerome's Hermeneutics", pp. 56–66.
- 23 This is stated in the very beginning of the works: *Adv. Helv.* I 1 (PL 23, p. 183): *Nuper rogatus a fratribus, ut adversus libellum cujusdam Helvidii responderem. . .*; *Adv. Iovin.* I 1 (PL 23, p. 211): *. . . sancti ex urbe Roma fratres cujusdam mihi Joviniani Commentariolos transmiserunt, rogantes, ut eorum ineptiis responderem. . .*
- 24 Jerome, *C. Rufin.* I 3.
- 25 *ep.* 83 in Jerome's collection.
- 26 See, e.g., *ep.* 54, to the widow Furia, cf. 54.1; *ep.* 107, to Laeta concerning the education of her daughter; *ep.* 130 to the virgin Demetrias.
- 27 As argued by Cain, *Letters of Jerome*.
- 28 Cf. Cain, *Letters of Jerome*, chap. 3: "Claiming Marcella".
- 29 Jerome, *ep.* 71.5. Cf. Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, p. 243: ". . . the conception of his complete works . . . had apparently begun to take hold".
- 30 Jerome, *ep.* 126.2.
- 31 Jerome, *ep.* 126.1 (CSEL 56, p. 143): *. . . quos libros reor sanctum parentem uestrum habere Oceanum. olim enim editi sunt multis Rufini libri aduersus nos calumnias respuentes.*
- 32 Jerome, *Comm. Mt.* praef.
- 33 Jerome, *ep.* 47.3 (CSEL 54, p. 346): *Opusculorum meorum, quia plurima euolauerunt de nidulo suo et temerario editiones honore uulgata sunt, nihil misi, ne eadem forsitan mitterem, quae habebas.*
- 34 Jerome, *ep.* 60.11 (CSEL 54, p. 562): *Illum oculis, illum manibus, illum sinu, illum ore tenebat. Cumque in stratu frequenter evolveret, saepe super pectus soporati, dulcis pagina decidebat. Si vero peregrinorum, si amicorum quispiam venerat, laetabatur nostro super se testimonio. Et quidquid minus in opusculo erat, distinctione moderata, et pronuntiationis varietate pensabat; ut in recitando illo, ipse vel placere quotidie, vel displicere videretur.*
- 35 Jerome, *ep.* 24.1 (CSEL 54, p. 214).
- 36 Jerome, *Comm. Os.* II, praef. (CCSL 76, p. 55): *Tu autem, Pammachi, qui nos facere praecepisti hoc, necesse est ut fautor sis imperii tui . . . uiperamque et scorpium iuxta fabulas poetarum, aduras cauterio, solea conteras; et Scylleos canes ac mortifera carmina sirenarum surda aure pertranseas; ut pariter audire et nosse ualeamus quid uaticinetur Osee propheta. . .*

Comm. Eph. I, praef. (PL 26, pp. 439–40): Quamobrem obsecro tam vos quae in praesentiarum estis, quam sanctam Marcellam, unicum viduitatis exemplar, ne facile maledicis et invidis opuscula mea tradatis, neque detis sanctum canibus, et margaritas mittatis ante porcos. Cf. the discussion in Cain, *Jerome's Commentaries*, pp. 55–57.

See, e.g., Jerome, *Comm. Hier. I* praef.; *Comm. Hier. V* praef.; *Comm. Ioel* praef.

See below, concerning Jerome's and Augustine's different views.

The clearest example of such criticism is found in the writings of Rufinus, mainly his *Apology against Jerome*, but it was also brought up by Pelagius; cf. Evans, *Pelagius*, pp. 6–25.

Concerning his expulsion from Rome, see Cain, "Origen, Jerome, and the *Senatus Pharisaeorum*".

Cf. Cain, "Rethinking Jerome's Portraits", p. 48: "Jerome, then, faced many dire challenges—most, alas, of his own creation—which seriously impaired his efforts to establish himself in the eyes of contemporary Christians as a credible authority figure."

For scholarly treatments of this conflict, see (Squires 2019; Dupont et al. 2025; Löhr 2015). Concerning Jerome's heresiological treatment of Pelagianism, see (Jeanjean 1999, pp. 245–69, 387–431).

Concerning Jerome's involvement in this controversy, see Evans, *Pelagius*, 6–42. Pelagius' critique seems to have concerned not only Jerome's dependence on Origen's work, but his views on asceticism as well. Further evidence that Jerome's approach to Origen was questioned is found in Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogues*, cf. below.

See *ep.* 104 in Jerome's collection. Another issue of contestation concerned the interpretation of Galatians 2.11–14, see *ep.* 67 in Jerome's collection and *ep.* 28 in Augustine's. Cf. the scholarly discussions in Fürst, *Augustinus Briefwechsel*; Hennings, *Der Briefwechsel*; White, *The Correspondence*.

The first letter that Augustine wrote to Jerome took nine years to reach the addressee, and there were several complications with the delivery of the letters. See Hennings, *Der Briefwechsel*, for a detailed description of this complexity and its consequences.

Jerome, *ep.* 102.3. The same name is used for Rufinus in *ep.* 70.6; *C. Rufin.* I 30.

Concerning Orosius see, e.g., (Dunn 2025).

Cf. Augustine's letter to Oceanus, *ep.* 180.

Rufinus wrote the *Apologia ad Anastasium* as a reaction to critique directed against him in the context of the Origenist controversy.

Jerome, *ep.* 126.1.

Jerome, *ep.* 134.1 (CSEL 56, p. 262): ... tuaque dicta quasi mea defendere ... ut perniciosissima heresis de ecclesiis auferatur. ...

Jerome, *Dial. Pelag.* III 19.

Augustine, *ep.* 180.2 (CSEL 44, p. 698): De origine animarum quid sanctus Hieronymus sentiat, iam sciebam. ...

Augustine, *ep.* 180.2 (CSEL 44, p. 698): uerum tamen, si aliquid hinc, quo ista quaestio solui queat, uel legisti uel ex ore eius audisti uel tibi ipsi dominus cogitanti donauit, ut noueris, impertire, obsecro, mihi, ut gratias uberiores agam.

Augustine, *ep.* 180.5.

It does not appear to have been published immediately after being written (in 397) but rather later and perhaps even after Jerome's death. Since it ends quite abruptly, it has been argued that Jerome never actually finished it, since the conflict had come to an end (cf. Kelly 1975, p. 207).

Augustine, *ep.* 169.13.

The work *Against Vigilantius* was written for the presbyters Riparius and Desiderius (cf. *C. Vigil.* 3).

Jerome, *ep.* 141 (CSEL 56, pp. 290–91): ... omnes heretici detestantur et me pari persequuntur odio. ...

Jerome, *ep.* 143.1 (CSEL 56, p. 293): *heresis Caelestina*.

Augustine, *C. Iul.* 3.17.32. Jerome is also mentioned in connection with Manichaeism in *Contra Iulianum, Opus imperfectum* 4.88, 89, 121.

Augustine, *C. Iul.* 2.10.33; cf. 2.10.37, in which Jerome is also mentioned together with other authorities.

Augustine, *C. Iul.* 2.10.36.

Augustine, *De natura* 65.78. The claim that the will is "drawn neither to virtue or to vice" comes from *Against Jovinian* II 3.

Augustine, *ep.* 148.7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15.

Augustine, *De gest. pelag.* 66.

Concerning this debate and the reception of Jerome, see Mathisen, "Use and Misuse", pp. 201–5.

Faustus, *ep.* 3 (CSEL 21, pp. 173–74): "'The globes of the stars', he [Jerome] says, 'are thought to be bodily spirits'."

Faustus, *ep.* 3 (CSEL 21, pp. 173–74): "'If the angels', he [Jerome] says, 'are said to be celestial bodies that are impure in comparison with God, how do you think that the human being should be valued?'"

Claudianus, *De statu animae* 1.11–12.

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.7 (SC 510, p. 128): ... Hieronymus, uir maxime catholicus et sacrae legis peritissimus, Origenem secutus primo tempore putabatur, qui nunc idem praecipue uel omni illius scripta damnaret.

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.9.

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.9 (SC 510, p. 136): Nam qui haereticum esse arbitrantur, insani sunt. There is an indication that Jerome's theory of asceticism had not been well received by certain monks in Gaul; "a certain book by him" (*quendam illius libellum*, p. 132)

is mentioned in which he had criticized monks who did not go far enough in their asceticism. This probably refers to descriptions in Jerome's *Letter 22* of certain characteristics that should not be found in monastics. It is interesting in this connection to note that Vigilantius, a main opponent of Jerome and a critic of radical asceticism, appears to have had ecclesiastical support in his native Gaul; cf. Jerome, *Contra Vigilantium* 2.

Cassian, *De Incarn.* 7.26 (CSEL 17, pp. 384, 385).

Gennadius, *Vir. Ill.* 40 (Herding, p. 89). Mathisen translates these words with "to teach him [Jerome] the nature of the soul" and lets this add to his argument concerning Gennadius' approach to Jerome ("Use and Misuse", p. 205). We would settle for the former translation, which implies that it is Orosius who is supposed to learn from Jerome, rather than the other way around.

Vir. Ill. 63.

Vir. Ill. 17 (Herding, p. 79): ... obtrectatori opusculorum suorum respondit duobus voluminibus...

Concerning Helvidius, Gennadius comments upon his erroneous use of the Scriptures; in his chapter on Vigilantius, Gennadius describes him as ignorant of the meaning of the Scriptures and particularly criticizes an interpretation of a vision in the book of Daniel. The presentations are similar to Jerome's depictions in *Against Helvidius* and *Letter 61* to Vigilantius respectively. It is remarkable that Gennadius omits important aspects of Vigilantius' teaching, which were discussed by Jerome in *Against Vigilantius*, and seems to rely only on Jerome's letter to Vigilantius.

Vir. Ill. 33 (Herding, p. 85): cuius pravitatem Hieronymus arguens libellum documentis scripturarum sufficienter satiatum adversum eum edidit.

Vir. Ill. 36.

Vir. Ill. 1.

For Jerome's reception in late antique Gaul, see Mathisen, "Use and Misuse"; concerning Gennadius, see pp. 199–200. Mathisen's main argument is that Jerome's early reception in Gaul was quite poor; he was only mentioned by a few authors and not in an overtly appreciative way.

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.8 (SC 510, p. 132).

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.7 (SC 510, p. 128).

Prosper of Aquitaine, *Carmen* 1.57. Concerning a possible dependence on Augustine's *Against Julian*, see (Vessey 2009, pp. 234–35).

Sulpicius Severus, *Dial.* 1.8.

Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 4.48; cf. 4.116.

Hydatius, *Chron.* 12; 21 (Burgess, pp. 80, 84).

Sidonius Apollinaris, *ep.* 4.3.7 (Anderson, p. 74). Cf. Mathisen, "Use and Misuse", p. 200.

Sidonius Apollinaris, *ep.* 9.2.2 (Anderson, p. 504).

As argued by Cain, *The Letters of Jerome*, cf. n. 2 above.

We thus do not completely agree with the statement by Cain that: "In his own lifetime, Jerome never came close to enjoying the widespread acclaim that accrued to him posthumously." ("Rethinking Jerome's Portraits", p. 47).

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