Introduction

“Jerome’s extensive collection of letters, which are the finest of Christian antiquity, is of the greatest historical importance for his life and times.”¹ A conference on letters and letter-writing of the early Christian and patristic era should therefore include a paper on the contribution of Jerome. He wrote his letters during the second half of the fourth and first decades of the fifth centuries; which falls in the period which Stowers² calls the golden age of Christian letter writing. Many works have recently been published on Jerome’s letters³ and it is impossible to give a detailed account of Jerome’s contribution in this regard in a conference paper — in Jerome’s own words: dies me deficiet.

In order to give a brief overview on “Jerome on Letters and Letter-writing,” I will be looking at Jerome’s Letter 57 in the light of Julius Victor’s⁴ precepts for letter-writing, as stated in his Ars Rhetorica 27.⁵ Julius Victor was the first rhetorician to include letter-writing as part of the ars rhetorica. According to Sykutris⁶ this work of Julius Victor

(4) Apart from his handbook on rhetoric, not much is known about this (probably) fourth century author. Trapp mentions that Victor possibly draws on the work of the third century rhetorician, Julius Titanus (M. Trapp, (ed.), Greek and Latin Letters, An Anthology with Translation (Cambridge, 2003) 321).
represents “the best theoretical work on the letter that we possess from antiquity.”

Letter 57\textsuperscript{7} which is also known as the “\textit{Liber de optimo genere interpretandi}”\textsuperscript{8} is one of Jerome’s longer letters\textsuperscript{9} and in this letter he defends his approach to translation, but it is more than a treatise on translation. It is in the first place a letter which must be studied with full regard to its historical situation and because of Jerome’s vigorous reaction.\textsuperscript{10} According to Bartelink this work only partially shows the characteristics of a letter and it is especially the introductory and concluding paragraphs\textsuperscript{11} which correspond to the form of a letter.\textsuperscript{12} The letter has a strong rhetorical character and displays the structure of a court speech, to be more specific, that of the “\textit{genus iudiciale}.”\textsuperscript{13} The vocabulary used in the introductory and concluding paragraphs\textsuperscript{14} of the letter typically belongs to legal discourse and reminds us more of a court room than a private letter. From the comparison Jerome

\footnotesize{(7) Bartelink wrote a comprehensive commentary on this letter: G. J. M. Bartelink, \textit{Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi (Epistula 57) Ein Kommentar} (Leiden, 1980)

(8) Despite the fact that Jerome himself refers to this work as \textit{liber} or \textit{libellus}, in the work itself the word \textit{epistula} is used (\textit{Ep.} 57. 1. 2 and 57. 13. 1). For Jerome’s letters I used the edition of I. Hilberg (ed.), \textit{Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus Epistulae. Partes I–III} (Wiesbaden, 1961) (CSEL, 54–56).

(9) “Not all of the letters are of equal interest or importance. Some are only brief notes, running but a few lines; others amount to pamphlet-length tracts” (C. C. Mierow (trans.), T. C. Lawler, (intr. and notes), \textit{The Letters of St. Jerome}, vol. 1 (New York, 1963) (ACW, 33) 4).

(10) Cf. “... ist er doch an erster Stelle als ein Gelegenheitsschreiben anlässlich der dem Hieronymus gemachten Vorwürfe zu betrachten ...” (BARTELINK, \textit{Liber de Optimo Genere...}, 1).

(11) These paragraphs are attached as an appendix.

(12) “\textit{Ep.} 57 hat teilweise einen Briefcharakter ...” (BARTELINK, \textit{Liber de Optimo Genere...}, 26).


(14) “de criminibus responsurus; accusor; sim ... defendendus; iudicus; error; crimen; accusator; argueret; criminatus est; interrogare and defensio, and from par. 13: falsarius vocor; crimen abluere, non referre, arbitrio tuo cuncta permitto; accusatorum meorum; iudicii and adversarii” (\textit{Ep.} 57, par. 1; CSEL, 54).
draws between his own situation and that of Paul, appearing before Agrippa, we can infer that this letter is meant as a defense of charges brought against him. The medium of the letter is used here to address the judge in absentia.

Next we look at Julius Victor’s *Ars Rhetorica (De Epistolis)*\(^{15}\) and at Jerome’s *Epistula 57*.\(^{16}\)

“There are two types of letter, official and private”

(*Ars Rhetorica 27*)

There are so many different ways in which authors categorize letters into different types,\(^{17}\) but this distinction between official and private seems useful. *Letter 57* would fall into the second category: it is addressed to a friend of Jerome and doesn’t deal with official business. If we classify this letter according to its contents, it can certainly be regarded as a didactic letter, containing elements of “polemics” and “personal invective.”\(^{18}\) Lawler\(^{19}\) mentions *Letter 57* as one of Jerome’s essay-letters. Jerome announces his purpose for this letter in the introduction and again in the conclusion of the letter:

- “... I send this letter to inform you — and through you others who think me worthy of their regard — of the true order of the facts.”\(^{20}\)

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(15) See appendix 1 for the text of Julius Victor’s *Ars Rhetorica 27*.


(18) Cf. “Jerome’s epistles comprise a wide range of subjects: ascetic exhortation, theological polemics, defense of orthodoxy, consolation, monastic advice, pedagogical discourse, scriptural exegesis, historical digressions, ecclesiastical politics, moral edification, and personal invective” (REBENICH, Jerome..., 79). He adds to this list the “cultivated letter of thanks”. TRAPP groups Jerome’s letters as follows: “They can be roughly categorized as eleven on points of dogma, twenty four exegetic, thirty on moral issues, eleven funeral orations (obituaries), thirty-one polemical, and a few private letters to friends” (TRAPP, Greek and Latin Letters..., 20)


(20) “... hanc epistulam misi, quae te et per te alios, qui nos amare dignantur, rei ordinem doceat” (*Ep. 57. 1; CSEL, 54*).
• “For the rest, I am satisfied to have instructed one of my dearest friends ...”²¹

From his word choice — especially rei ordinem doceat and instruxisse it seems as if his main purpose is to teach and to instruct, which points to the didactic purpose of the letter.

**Official Letters**

Victor only briefly touches on the precepts for official letters. He mentions the inclusion of historical matter in a letter but warns that it should not diminish the epistolary charm. Although Letter 57 is not an official letter, Jerome does include three historical exempla in the third paragraph to point out the integrity and honesty of the pagan Romans in contrast to the corrupt conduct of his Christian opponent(s). He integrates these stories very well into his argument and manages to keep it short and to the point.

**Private Letters**

“In private letters the first rule to follow is brevity”

*(Ars Rhetorica 27)*

In Letter 57 we find the following indications that Jerome is well aware of this rule:

• “Let us pass on to other passages, for the brief limits of a letter do not suffer us to dwell too long on any one point”²²

• “It would be tedious now to enumerate, what great additions and omissions the Septuagint has made, ...”²³

• “I have exceeded the limits of a letter, but I have not exceeded in the expression of my chagrin.”²⁴

There are so many references to this precept for letter-writing in the other letters of Jerome, but I mention only a few of them:

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(21) “Porro mihi sufficit amicum instruxisse carissimum ...” (*Ep. 57. 13; CSEL, 54*).

(22) “… neque enim epistulae brevitatis patitius in singulis morari” (*Ep. 57. 8; CSEL 54*).

(23) “Longum est nunc evolvere, quanta Septuaginta de suo addiderint, quanta dimiserint ...” (*Ep. 57. 11; CSEL, 54*).

(24) “Exessi mensuram epistulae, sed non exessi doloris modum” (*Ep. 57. 13; CSEL, 54*).
"I may perhaps have been tedious, and have said more than the short compass of a letter usually allows ..."25

"The brief limits of a letter compel me to be silent; my affection for you urges me to speak."26

"You see how, carried away by my love of the Scriptures, I have exceeded the limits of a letter yet have not fully accomplished my object."27

"That I may not make myself tedious or exceed the due limits of a letter by repeating old stories, I will briefly relate to you an incident which happened in my childhood."28

"The next requirement is clarity" (Ars Rhetorica 27)

"Letters ought to be crystal clear, except when the writing is secret by deliberate design, and such writing, even though cryptic to everyone else, should nevertheless be clear as day to its recipients" (Ars Rhetorica 27).

If we read Letter 57, we can surely say that he generally does comply with the condition of clarity. There are however two images / proverbs used in paragraph 12, which are not one hundred percent clear. On a first reading, it doesn’t really make sense, but I believe that the addressee Pammachius understood it without difficulty, since he knew the author and the historical background. In the first instance Jerome says: “The common proverb is true of me: ‘He who trains an ox for athletics loses both oil and money.’”29 This common proverb30 seems to be not that common after all, but would surely have been understood

(25) “Plura fortasse, quam epistulae brevitas patiebatur, longo sermone protracteram ...” (Ep. 3. 6; CSEL, 54).
(26) “Epistulae brevitas compellit tacere, desiderium vestri cogit loqui” (Ep. 7. 6; CSEL 54).
(27) “Cernis me scripturarum amore raptum excessisse modum epistulae et tamen non inplesse, quod volui” (Ep. 53. 9; CSEL, 54).
(28) “Et ne veteres replicando historias longum faciam et excedam mensuram epistulae, brevem tibi fabellam referam, quae infantiae meae temporibus accidit” (Ep. 68. 2; CSEL 54).
(29) “Conpletur in me tritum vulgi semone proverbium: oleum perdit et inpensas, qui bovem mittit ad ceroma” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).
(30) Bartelink points to the fact that the first part of the proverb was known since Plautus’ time, but that there are no parallels for the second part and he does not offer any explanation for the saying (Bartelink, Liber de Optimo Genere..., 114).
by Pammachius and Jerome’s opponent(s) against whom this letter was aimed. Another, equally obscure sentence follows: “Still he is not to blame who merely puts on the mask and plays the tragedy for another: his teachers are the real culprits; since they for a great price have taught him — to know nothing.” Again Bartelink fails to provide a satisfactory explanation. In this case I believe that Jerome intentionally hides the meaning, in a passage in which he seriously questions his opponent’s training and literary ability. By using sarcasm and irony he is mocking his opponent, who has questioned his abilities as a translator. With regard to the precept not to use less well-known proverbs, we have seen that Jerome refers to a common proverb, just to quote a somewhat obscure combination of two seemingly unrelated sayings. It thus seems if Jerome generally adheres to the principle of clarity, but that he sometimes deliberately obscures the meaning. There is a hint in the first paragraph that everything might not be lucid to all readers. By stating that the success of the orator’s presentation depends on the intelligence of the judge, he implies that the reader should be erudite to follow the writer’s communication.

Victor here also mentions the fact that the person to whom you are writing a letter is not with you and that he cannot ask you to explain something more clearly. The concept of the absent addressee is an epistolary commonplace, which features strongly in Jerome’s letters. In the first paragraph of Letter 57 Jerome mentions that Paul considered himself fortunate to appear before (in the presence of) King Agrippa (praesente Agrippa rege) to respond to the charges of the Jews. In comparing himself to Paul, Jerome also regards himself fortunate to plead his case before the learned ears of someone, (Pammachius)

(31) “haec non est illius culpa, cuius sub persona alius agit tragoediam, sed magistrorum eius, qui illum magna mercede nihil scire docuerunt” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).

(32) Bartelink and Kelly think that the magistrorum eius, refers to ‘their instructors’, presumably Rufinus and Melania, whose names appear in some Mss” (Bartelink, Liber de Optimo Genere..., 115; J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome. His Life, Writings and Controversies (London, 1975) 203), but this doesn’t really make sense (See J. P. K. Kritzinger, Die vertaling en interpretasie van twee beeldte in Brief 57 van Hieronymus, Acta Classica, (1998) 119–130 for possible translations and explanations of these two images).

(33) “Legerat enim illud Esaia: Beatus, qui in aures loquitur audientis, et noverat tantum oratoris verba proficere, quantum iudicis prudentia cognovisset” (Ep. 57. 1 ; CSEL, 54).
who however is not present and therefore he has to send him a letter. The letter has to bridge the gap and represent the author to the absent recipient.34

The Style of Private Letters

In describing the appropriate style for private letters, Victor again emphasizes clarity; neither the important ideal of brevity, nor the tendency to compose in an ornate style should obscure the meaning. Jerome comments on style in Letter 57 and advocates holy simplicity (sancta simplicitas) against loquacious rudeness (verbosa rusticitas).35 He skilfully plays with the double meanings of simplicitas and rusticitas, which can both refer to either a style of writing or a style of living.36 In the rest of the letter, Jerome promotes his ‘sensus de sensu’ approach to translation, which also takes the style of the target language into consideration; something which a ‘verbum e verbo’ (word for word) approach is unable to achieve.37

Gregory of Nazianzus wrote a letter38 in which he discusses the art of letter-writing under the categories of brevity, clarity and grace. He advocates a natural style which leans towards conversational.39

(34) For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Trapp, Greek and Latin Letters..., 38–39 and Klauck, Ancient Letters..., 192–193.

(35) “… venerationi mihi semper fuit non verbosa rusticitas, sed sancta simplicitas: qui in sermone imitari se dicit apostolos, prius imitetur in vita” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).


(37) “If anyone imagines that translation does not impair the charm of style, let him render Homer word for word into Latin, nay I will go farther still and say, let him render it into Latin prose, and the result will be that the order of the words will seem ridiculous and the most eloquent of poets scarcely articulate (Quodsi cui non videtur linguae gratiam interpretacione mutari, Homerum ad verbum exprimat in Latinum — plus aliquid dicam —, eundem sua in lingua prosae verbis interpretetur: videbit ordinem ridiculum et poetam eloquentissimum vix loquentem)” (Ep. 57. 5; CSEL, 54).


(39) “As far as clarity is concerned, the main point to notice is that one must avoid sounding like a speech, and lean rather in the direction of the
judge *Letter 57* of Jerome according to Gregory’s guidelines, it would certainly be regarded as pretentious and affected. We should however remember that Jerome is defending his literary abilities in this letter. It is an important part of his defense to show off his literary skill and proficiency. There are, however, many letters which have a more personal tone and which are written in a more natural conversational style.40

**The Addressees of the Letter**

“If you are writing to a superior, your letter should not be droll; if to an equal, it should not be cold; if to an inferior, it should not be too haughty; nor carelessly written if to a learned correspondent, nor cursorily written if to a close friend, nor lacking warmth if to someone not so close” (*Ars Rhetorica* 27).

Here Victor addresses the issue of adapting the style according to the recipient. As stated above, Jerome writes this letter to Pammachius, whom he called the “most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians” (*vir omnium nobilium Christianissime, Christianorum nobilissime*) and “dearest friend” (*amicum carissimum*).41 In other writings Pammachius is called “sanctus Pammachius”, “admirabilis sanctusque vir Pammachius”, “eruditissimo viro fratri tuo Pammachio”, “sancto atque eruditissimo viro fratri tuo Pammachio” and “vir eruditissimus frater tuus”.42 He is writing to a learned man in a learned style and here it seems that he is in line with Victor’s guidelines.

“**Be profuse in congratulating someone on a success, so as to increase his joy**” (*Ars Rhetorica* 27)

There are no congratulations in *Letter 57*, and Jerome’s letter corpus does not contain a group of letters that can be categorized as congratulatory letters. Letter 86 can certainly been seen as a letter of congratulation, in which Jerome congratulates Theophilus with his success against Origenism and also mentions the good work of Priscus and conversational” and “One should especially aim at this in letters, too: to be unadorned, and as near as possible to what is natural” (Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus...*, 178).

(40)  E. g. *Epistulae*. 4; 5; 6; 7; 11, 12, 13, 23; 24; 31, 32, 71, etc.

(41)  *Ep*. 57. 1; 57. 13; CSEL, 54.

(42)  See Bartelink, *Liber de Optimo Genere...*, 122.
Eubulus. In *Letter* 141 he likewise congratulates Augustine for his hard work as restorer of the ancient faith against heresy.

“When you encounter someone who is grieving, console him in few words” (*Ars Rhetorica* 27)

“Ten letters in Jerome’s *opera omnia* are written to offer words of comfort to friends afflicted by grief,” but *Letter* 57 is not one of them. With regard to these consolatory letters, Rebenich mentions that “Jerome varied his composition with regard to the individual addressee, specific situation of the case, and the persons involved.” Scourfield wrote an excellent commentary on *Letter* 60 and in his introduction he gives an overview of the consolatory tradition; both pagan and Christian. He indicates “how Jerome intertwines the two traditions, and how he employs originally pagan ideas for a Christian end.” Letter 60 is one of the longer letters and in this case Jerome does not “console him in few words”.

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(43) “unde, licet per sanctos fratres Priscum et Eubulum tuus ad nos sermo cessaverit, tamen, quia videmus illos zelos fidei concitatos raptim Palaestinae lustrasse regiones et dispersos regulos usque ad suas latebras persecutos, breviter scribimus, quod totus orbis exultet et in tuis victoriis glorietur .... Macte virtute, macte zelo fidei! (So, though the reverend brothers Priscus and Eubulus have been slow in bringing me your letters, yet, as they are now hastening in the ardour of faith from end to end of Palestine and scattering and driving into their holes the basilisks of heresy, I write a few lines to congratulate you on your success. The whole world glories in your victories. ... Blessings on you courage! blessings on your zeal!)” (*Ep*. 86; CSEL 55).


(45) *Rebenich, Jerome*, 119.

(46) Ibid.


(48) Cf. “These writers achieved a synthesis of classical rhetoric and Christian traditions best exemplified in the East by Gregory of Nazianzus and in the West by Jerome and Augustine” (*Stowers, Letter Writing..., 45*).

(49) *Scourfield, Consoling Heliodorus..., 23*. 
“It is never right to be abusive, but least of all in a letter”
(Ars Rhetorica 27)

If we look at this precept of Victor, we realize that many of Jerome’s letters do not comply with it. The following quotations from Letter 57 serve as an indication of how he describes his opponents and of what he accuses them:

- “For a rash tongue charges me with ignorance or falsehood ...”
- “For a pretended monk — either bribed as there is much reason to believe or actuated by malice of his own as his tempter vainly tries to convince us — showed himself a second Judas by robbing Eusebius of his literary property and gave to the adversary an occasion of railing against me.”
- “I wish to ask those persons who confound wisdom with cunning some few questions.”
- “A strange plea truly to defend a fraud as though robbers, thieves, and pirates did not do the same. Certainly, when Annas and Caiaphas led hapless Judas astray, they only did what they believed to be expedient for themselves.”


(51) “... inperitae linguae responsurus sum, quae obicit mihi vel ignorantiam vel mendacium ...” (Ep. 57. 1; CSEL, 54; emphasis by the author here and in the rest of the footnotes).

(52) “Nam quidam pseudomonachus vel accepta pecunia, ut perspicue intellegi datur, vel gratuita malitia, ut incassum corruptor nititur persuadere, copilatis chartis eius et sumptibus Judas factus est proditor deditque adversariis latrandi contra me occasionem ...” (Ep. 57. 2; CSEL, 54). Cf. also: “latrare wird mehrmals von Hieronymus verwendet, wenn es sich um heftige Invektiven handelt ... In der christlichen Literatur findet es sich besonders als Charakterisierung häretischer Angriffe ...” (Bartelink, Liber de Optimo Genebre, 35).

(53) “… volo interrogare eos, qui malitiam prudentiam vocant ...” (Ep. 57. 3; CSEL, 54).

(54) “Mira sceleris defensio! Quasi non et latrones et fures ac piratae faciant, quod sibi prodest. Certe Annas et Caiphas seducentes infelicem Judam fecerunt, quod sibi utile existimabant” (Ep. 57. 3; CSEL, 54).
• “One man inveighs against you as a heretic, another as a perverter of doctrine ...”\textsuperscript{55}

• “I refer to these passages ... to bring home to my critics their own want of knowledge ...”\textsuperscript{56}

Jerome reverses the charges against him (a crimen and an error) and accuses his opponents likewise of a crime (bribing and stealing) and an error (their ignorance about the best method of translation) and he further implies that they are heretics.

This precept of Victor relates to the idea that the letter is basically a friendly form: “Letters have an important role to play in creating and sustaining friendships, whether between private individuals, or in contexts in which friendship has some larger public or organizational importance.”\textsuperscript{57} But it is also a reality that there are many letters which lack this friendly character. It seems as if the strong rhetorical influence also poses a threat to the conversational style and the friendly character of the letter.

“Headings and conclusions to letters should be calculated according to the differences in the degree of friendship or of rank involved, with due regard for conventional practice” \textit{(Ars Rhetorica 27)}

Jerome does adapt greetings according to the rank or status of the addressees. Fürst discusses in great detail the different greeting forms and honorary titles which Jerome and Augustine use in their correspondence.\textsuperscript{58} He contends that their different greeting forms demonstrate that Augustine was more positive towards their friendship\textsuperscript{59}, and he also points out how Jerome’s use of the titles change as their relationship weakens.

\textsuperscript{55} “Alius te hereticum, alius insimulat dogmatum perversorum ...” (Ep. 57. 4; CSEL, 54).

\textsuperscript{56} “Haec replica ... ut reprehensores meos arguam inperitiae ...” (Ep. 57. 9; CSEL, 54).

\textsuperscript{57} Trapp, \textit{Greek and Latin Letters...}, 40

\textsuperscript{58} A. Fürst, \textit{Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus} (Münster, 1999) (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband, 29) 119–130.

\textsuperscript{59} “Daß das Freundschaftsabstraktum caritas tua, wofür einmal bedeutungsgleich dilectio tua steht, bei Augustinus weitaus am häufigsten vorkommt, signalisiert sein aufrichtiges Interesse an einer freundschaftlicher Beziehung, während die steife Standestitulatur bei Hieronymus eine höfliche, aber bestimmte Reserviertheit verrät” (Fürst, \textit{Augustins Briefwechsel...}, 122).
“When replying, you should do so with the letter you are replying to before you, in case anything that needs an answer escapes your memory”

(Ars Rhetorica 27)

Jerome mentions the letter which he translated from Greek into Latin and on account of which he was accused of a bad translation, either out of ignorance, or with malevolent intent. He only refers to one specific charge though, where he allegedly made a mistake in his translation:

“But to pass by this limitless field of discussion and to show you, most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians, what is the kind of falsification which is censured in my translation, I will set before you the opening words of the letter in the Greek original and as rendered by me, that from one count in the indictment you may form an opinion of all.”

Jerome then continues to give the Greek text and his Latin translation as well as the commentary of his opponent(s) on his free translation. After this he gave a very literal, word for word rendering and compliments it with great sarcasm as: “Here, indeed we have eloquence worthy of Plautus, here we have Attic grace, the true style of the Muses.”

It seems, from his reaction, as if he has the letter with him and in the final paragraph he says that Pammachius should read the letter itself, both the Greek original and his Latin translation, and that he would then see the dissatisfaction of his accusers for what it is. Here again Jerome’s practice seemingly corresponds to Victor’s guideline.

(60) “Sed ut infinita praeteream et ostendam tibi, vir omnium nobilium Christianissime, Christianorum nobilissime, cuius modi falsitates in epistulæ translatione reprehendant, ipsius epistulæ ponam cum Graeco sermonem principium, ut ex uno crimine intellegantur et cetera ...” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).

(61) “Haec est Plautina eloquentia, hic lepos Atticus et Musarum, ut dicunt, eloquio comparandus” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).

“The ancients were in the habit of writing to their closest friends, or at least in most cases of adding a subscription, in their own hand” (*Ars Rhetorica* 27)

We know that Jerome used stenographers to whom he dictated his letters. There is no indication that *Letter 57* was an exception and there is also no reference to a subscription in his own hand here. In a detailed note on “accito notario” Bartelink says that it is apparently only for his early letters which Jerome did not use “notarii”. There are also references to his practice of dictating his letters with great speed, apparently to serve as an excuse for any mistakes or omissions.

“Letters of recommendation should be written honestly or not at all; this condition will be met if you write them in the warmest terms to a very close friend, and if what you are asking for is reasonable and realistic” (*Ars Rhetorica* 27)

There are no recommendations in *Letter 57*, but *Letter 103* is a short letter of introduction in which Jerome commends the deacon Praesidius to Augustine and there is no reason to believe that it was not written in honesty. In *Letter 147.11* however, Jerome complains about a dishonest recommendation of Sabinianus, written by a priest: “Who could refuse to welcome one who declared himself to be a monk; especially if he were ignorant of your tragic career and had read the letters of commendation which your bishop had addressed to other

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(64) The term dictare is used from *Letter 18* onwards (*Bartelink, Liber de Optimo Genere...,* 31).

(65) “… si celeritate dictantis aliqua verba dimiserim” (*Ep.* 57. 10; CSEL, 54).

(66) “Nunc quoque per sanctum fratrem meum Praesidium diaconum obsecro primum, ut memineris mei, dein, ut baiulum litterarum habeas commendatum et mihi scias germanissimum et, in quibuscumque necessitas postularit, foveas atque sustenses, non quo aliqua re Christo tribuente indigete, sed quod bonorum amicitias avidissime expetat et si in his coniungendis maximum putet beneficium consecutum” (*Ep.* 103. 1; CSEL, 55).
prelates?”  

“In the same paragraph Sabinianus is described as a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“Adding a phrase or two in Greek to a letter is an elegant touch, provided that you do not do it in the wrong place or too often” (Ars Rhetorica 27)

Letter 57 contains a few Greek words and phrases, and they fit well into the context of the whole:

- “Quam vos veritatem interpretationis, hanc eruditī κακοζηλίαν nuncunpant.”
- “… sed ut ἐμφατκώτερον faceret et sensum vocantis et imperantis exprimeret, addidit tibi dico.”
- “… in Hebraeo iuxta linguæ illius ἱδίωμα ita scriptum est: …”
- “… et tamen apostolus non verbum expressit e verbo, sed παραφραστικῶς eundem sensum aliis sermonibus indicavit.”

It is clear from the above that Jerome employs single Greek words sparingly and to good effect.

“[It] is also very suitable to use a well-known proverb, or a line or phrase of poetry” (Ars Rhetorica 27)

Jerome uses a number of proverbs and proverbial expressions in Letter 57. A few examples will suffice:

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(67) “Quis non susciperet eum, qui se monachum promittebat, praesertim ignorans tragoedias tuas et episcopi tui commendaticias ad ceteros sacerdotes epistulas legens?” (Ep. 147. 11; CSEL, 56).

(68) Some of the Greek words and phrases in Letter 57 however, form a part of Jerome’s discussion concerning his Latin translation of the mentioned Greek letter of Epiphanius.

(69) “What men like you call fidelity in transcription, the learned term pestilent minuteness” (Ep. 57. 5; CSEL, 54).

(70) “To emphasize this and to give the impression of one calling and commanding he has added ‘I say unto thee’” (Ep. 57. 7; CSEL, 54).

(71) “… in the Hebrew idiom it is written thus …” (Ep. 57. 7; CSEL, 54).

(72) “… and yet the apostle has not rendered his original word for word, but, using a paraphrase, he has given the sense in different terms” (Ep. 57. 9; CSEL, 54).
• “You may as the fable has it, penetrate by means of your gold to the chamber of Danaë.”73
• “And care not thou with over anxious thought to render word for word.”74
• “It is all for nothing then that I have studied so long; that, as Juvenal says, “I have so often withdrawn my hand from the ferule.”75
• “The moment I leave the harbour I run aground.”76
• “Well, to err is human and to confess one’s error wise.”77
• “The common proverb is true of me: ‘He who trains an ox for athletics loses both oil and money.’ Still he is not to blame who merely puts on the mask and plays the tragedy for another: his teachers are the real culprits.”78
• “... and I heartily wish that we can all say with Socrates ‘I know that I know nothing;’ and carry out the precept of another wise man, ‘Know thyself.’”79
• “Still it would be absurd for one of us — living as we do amid the riches of Croesus and the luxuries of Sardanapalus — to make his boast of mere ignorance”80

As stated earlier, it is important to know that Jerome wants to prove to the reader that the charge of ignorance is unfounded; 81 he has to

(73) “... ut in fabulis legimus, auro ad Danaen penetres ...” (Ep. 57. 4; CSEL, 54).
(74) “nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus interpres” (Ep. 57. 5; CSEL, 54). This is a quotation from Horace’s Ars Poetica 133.
(75) “Ergo frustra tanto tempore studuimus et saepe manum ferulae subduximus?” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54). This is a quotation from Juvenal, 3. 10. 2.
(76) “Egredientes de portu statim impegimus” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54). See Bartelink, Liber de Optimo Genere..., 112–113 for a discussion of Jerome’s use of ship and sea images.
(77) “Igitur, quia errare humanum est et confiteri errorem prudentis ...” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL 54).
(78) Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54. See the discussion of this passage above.
(80) “Ceterum ridiculum, si quis e nobis inter Croesi opes et Sardanapalli delicias de sola rusticitate se iactet, ...” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).
(81) RebENICH says about the letter of thanks that “[s]uch a letter offered the golden opportunity of displaying classical and biblical erudition” (ReBENICH, Jerome..., 79). This is also true of Letter 57. Jerome argues that in his “sensus de sensu” approach to translation he is following the classical tradition...
convince his readers of his literary skill and in my opinion he succeeds in doing so. Jerome’s Letter 57 complies with the precept of Victor in this instance, although he might have objected that there are too many quotations or proverbial expressions, especially in paragraph 12.

“It is elegant sometime to address your correspondent as if he were physically present, as in ‘hey, you!’ and ‘what’s that you say?’ and ‘I see you scoff’”

(Ars Rhetorica 27)

In paragraph 12.2 Jerome uses the rhetorical figure of speech, exclamation, to address his opponent directly. Although the letter is first of all addressed to his friend, Pammachius, it is also second of all aimed at his opponent(s). His tone is highly sarcastic when he praises his opponent as follows:

“What is this you are saying, O pillar of learning and latter day Aristarchus, who are so ready to pass judgment upon all writers?”

(82)  “Quid ais, o columen litterarum et nostrorum temporum Aristarche, qui de universis scriptoribus sententiam feras?” (Ep. 57. 12; CSEL, 54).

“In conclusion, remember to cultivate a good style not only in your letters but in everything that you write”

(Ars Rhetorica 27)

In this last sentence, Victor again touches on the relationship between (letter-) writing and conversation and it can be linked with his opening sentence, in which he said that many of the instructions given for conversation are also applicable to letters. In Letter 57 we have also seen a similar strong relationship between court speech and a didactic letter.

Conclusion

Regarding the relationship between rhetoric and letter-writing Klauck says: “There are affinities, but also divergences, and the relationship changes with the passing of time, from a striking reservation of rhetoric with regard to epistolary theory to the beginnings of an integration of letters into rhetoric” and he adds that “… the converging lines of the oration and the letter did not actually cross in theoretical...

as well as the Christian tradition, followed by the authors of the New Testament, the Septuagint translators and other Christian authors.

reflection until late antiquity.” He refers to Ottmers\(^8^4\) who said that the letter was not treated as a rhetorical genre in its own right until the Middle Ages. From the discussion above it seems that Jerome’s Letter 57 represents an important development towards the integration of letters into rhetoric.

Rousseau says that “... Jerome established himself as above all a correspondent, whether by letter or by commentary, marrying distance with instruction.”\(^8^5\) We have seen that he has also succeeded in Letter 57 in marrying oratory and letter-writing very naturally into a masterpiece; he composed to a learned friend an exceptional letter with a strong rhetorical character.

In his *Ars Rhetorica*, (De Epistolis), Julius Victor incorporated (in an appendix) letter-writing into rhetorical theory; in his *Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi* Eusebius Hieronymus likewise incorporated rhetoric into letter-writing.

**Julius Victor**

*Ars Rhetorica (De Epistoris)* 27

Epistolis conveniunt multa eorum, quae de sermone praecepta sunt. Epistolarum species duplex est; sunt enim aut negotiales aut familiares. Negotiales sunt argumento negotioso et gravi. In hoc genere et sententiarum pondera et verborum lumina et figurarum insignia compendii opera requiruntur atque omnia denique oratoria praecepta, una modo exceptione, ut aliquid de summis copiis detrahamus et orationem proprius sermo explicet. si quid historicum epistola comprehenderis, declinari oportet a plena formula historiae, ne recedat ab epistolae gratia. si quid etiam eruditius scribas, sic disputa, ut ne modum epistolae corrumpas. In familiaribus litteris primo brevitas observanda: ipsarum quoque sententiarum ne diu circumferatur, quod Cato ait, ambitio,

sed ita recidantur ut numquam verbi aliquid deesse videatur: unum ‘te’ scilicet, quod intellegentia suppleatur, in epistolis Tullianis ad Atticum et Axiun frequentissimum est. lucem vero epistolis praefulgere oportet, nisi cum consulto [consilio] clandestinae litterae flant, quae

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Hieronymus

Epistula 57. 1 and 13 (CSEL, 54)

1. Paulus apostolus praesente Agrippa rege de criminibus responsurus, quae posset intellegere, qui auditurus erat, sequens de causae victoria statim in principio gratulatur dicens: De omnibus, quibus accusator a Iudaeis, o rex Agrippa, aestimo me beatum, cum apud te sim hodie defendendus, qui praecipue nosti cunctas, quae in Iudaeis sunt, consuetudines
et quæstiones. Legerat enim illud Esaia: Beatus, qui in aures loquitur audientis, et noverat tantum oratoris verba proficere, quantum iudicis prudentia cognovisset.

Unde et ego beatum me in hoc dumtaxat negotio iudico, quod apud eruditas aures inperitae linguae responsurus sum, quae obicit mihi vel ignorantiam vel mendacium, si aut nescivi alienas litteras vere inter pretari aut nolui: quorum alterum error, alterum crimen est. Ac ne forsitan accusator meus facilitate, qua cuncta loquitur, et inpunitate, qua sibi licere omnia putat, me quoque apud vos argueret, ut papam Epiphanium criminatus est, hanc epistulam misi, quae te per te alios, qui nos amare dignantur, rei ordinem doceat.


SUMMARY

In this article Jerome’s Letter 57 is discussed in the light of Julius Victor’s precepts for letter-writing, as stated in his Ars Rhetorica 27. The different precepts for private letters, such as brevity, clarity, adapting the style according to the recipient, adding a phrase or two in Greek, the use of proverbs or a line of poetry, etc., are discussed with reference to Jerome’s letter. It is shown that this letter of Jerome which displays the structure of a court speech, still largely complies with the precepts given by Julius Victor. The strong rhetorical character of Letter 57 is pointed out and it is concluded that, just as Julius Victor had incorporated letter-writing into rhetorical theory, Jerome had skilfully incorporated oratory into letter-writing.