

Anja Božič

**PRAISING SAINT JEROME OR PRAISING ELOQUENCE: PIER
PAOLO VERGERIO'S *SERMONES PRO SANCTO HIERONYMO*
AND HIS LETTERS**

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

Examiner

Examiner

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Abstract

Pier Paolo Vergerio's orations, *Sermones pro Sancto Hieronymo* (1392–1408), are considered to be the earliest examples of the classicizing orations (panegyrics) in praise of a Christian saint. In contrast to the thematic sermons of the scholastic writers, these orations omit the biblical quotation at the beginning and adapt the classical epideictic genre. The secondary literature has chiefly focused either on the stylistic features of the orations or their function within the humanist cult of Saint Jerome. In contrast, this thesis connects both aspects and interprets Vergerio's work as an outcome of their harmonious alignment. Counter to the seminal studies it treats the orations separately as a series of independent pieces. It features a catalog of the orations' structured outlines and pinpoints the standard patterns of praising oratory. The analysis looks for similarities in the material from which Vergerio takes to develop these praising patterns. It illustrates the strands of resemblances in their contents according to the specificities of the context in which the orations were delivered. Moreover, the examination involves Vergerio's letters in praise of St. Jerome and places them in parallel with the orations. The correspondences found in the examples of the two different literary formats highlight Vergerio's singular approach to the formation of the epideictic patterns. Finally, the thesis studies Vergerio's utilization of the humility tropes and his omissions of miracles. Based on textual analysis, it points out his pioneering adaptations of the material provided from the contemporary devotional practice to the classical epideictic genre.

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Introduction

During the years 1390–1408, one of the leading humanists of his generation, Pier Paolo Vergerio, delivered at least ten public orations in honor of Saint Jerome. His orations, *Sermones pro Sancto Hieronymo*, are considered to be the earliest examples of the classicizing orations (panegyrics) in the context of sacred praise.¹ In them, Vergerio actively contributes to the shaping of the humanist cult of St. Jerome, while also creating a new and influential model for the humanists' epideictic oratory.² Following the classical precepts, rather than the traditional thematic form of medieval speeches, these orations illustrate one of the most discernible aspects of the humanists' alignment of classicization with contemporaneity.³ Accordingly, the topics of their content shifts from the saints' miraculous performances to topics that are in conformity with contemporary humanist preferences.

As an active scholar of numerous fields, from the theory of education, canon law, and medicine to logic and rhetoric, Vergerio portrays a similarly active figure of Jerome and calls to the imitation of his countless virtues. Jerome's erudition and his piety are indeed emphasized, yet Vergerio applies another innovation. Omitting the biblical quotation, which otherwise guided the course of thematic speeches, Vergerio employs all of Jerome's typical attributes and develops them according to the specific context of the oration in question. The

¹ John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450–1521*, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), 86. I refer to Vergerio's orations by the title most frequently adopted by the relevant secondary literature.

² According to classical rhetoric theory, the epideictic genre was one of the main three genres of oratory, which was used to convey praise or blame during ceremonies. Theodore Chalon Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*, Studies in Classical Philology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902).

³ The thematic form appeared in the late twelfth century and coincides with the birth of Scholasticism. The central study of the theme remains Harry Caplan, *Of Eloquence: Studies in Ancient and Mediaeval Rhetoric* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1970). For Latin medieval preaching see Nicole Bériou, "Les Sermons Latins Après 1200," in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kinzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 363–447, Nicole Bériou and David D'Avray, *Modern Questions About Medieval Sermons: Essays on Marriage, Death, History and Sanctity* (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto medioevo, 1994).

new form enables him to make use of a variety of topics, and rather than merely cataloging them, Vergerio arranges Jerome's deeds in patterns, characteristic of the epideictic genre. Many a time, he avails himself of humility tropes, declaring his rhetorical inadequacy to praise such an excellent subject suitably. In this manner, Vergerio exploits the patent abundance of Jerome's merits to avoid the topic of miracles and depict the saint as a familiar, affable figure. In addition, into constant digressions about his own rhetorical inadequacy, he scatters numerous tropes, formed out of the material provided from the sacred context.

To attest to St. Jerome's excellence, Vergerio also offers himself as a witness. As he explains in one of his orations, his inspiration to praise Jerome has its roots in his family's ancient tradition and his personal experience. As a result of Jerome's divine intercession, Vergerio's family survived the attacks of Genoans on their hometown, Iustinopolis (now Koper in Slovenia), which further deepened their already ardent devotion, cultivated most notably by Vergerio's father. After his death, Vergerio presents himself as the sole heir to the family tradition, whereby he takes a vow to deliver a speech in the saint's honor each year on his name day, the 30th of September.

The story of Vergerio's childhood also served as the backdrop of this research. My first engagement with him was through an early work of his, the comic play *Paulus*, which I translated into Slovene for an open theatre performance, staged by the students of the Department of Classics.⁴ What truly deepened my feeling of kinship with Vergerio was, however, our shared fascination with another humanist – Petrarch. In addition to preparing the first edition of Petrarch's *Africa*, Vergerio also compiled his biography. Moreover, Vergerio produced the *vita* out of the excerpts of Petrarch's "Letter to Posterity," that I happened to have

⁴ Written in 1390, *Paulus* is the earliest extant Latin humanist comedy. An edition and an English translation is available in Gary R. Grund, *Humanist Comedies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). For my Slovene translation see Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder "Paulus: Comoedia ad iuvenum mores corrigendos," trans. Anja Božič, *Keria: Studia Latina et Graeca* 21, no. 2 (2019): 125–52. <https://doi.org/10.4312/keria.21.2.125-152>.

translated some years prior.⁵ Vergerio's *vita* is also part of an early incunabula, *Petrarca Redivivus*, preserved in the archive collection Bibliotheca Iustinopolitana in Koper.⁶ Sadly, this is the only edition, containing Vergerio's work that remains in Koper.⁷ For example, an early manuscript codex of Vergerio's *Sermones*, which used to be part of the archives' collection, disappeared amidst the chaos of the Second World War and has been missing ever since. Nowadays, one would be hard-pressed to find any marker of Vergerio's origins in Koper, let alone conspicuous ones. Unfortunately, the return of the manuscript to Koper is unlikely, since it cannot be traced anymore. Nevertheless, with my research of its contents (even if in modern addition), I wish to make a humble tribute to the lost codex and its original residence.

The secondary literature chiefly focuses either on the stylistic features of Vergerio's orations or their function within the cult of St. Jerome. Their contents as a unified outcome of both have, in fact, not been investigated in great depth. Furthermore, the orations have never been treated separately and as individual pieces. Yet, Vergerio's innovative approach had repercussions beyond the inclusion of classical vocabulary and the embellishment of St. Jerome's main attributes. This thesis offers a different angle of examination that starts from the perspective of the epideictic oratory while maintaining a firm awareness of the new Christian context. A comprehensive textual analysis will be presented to point out the typical patterns of the epideictic genre. Examining the orations separately, it will indicate Vergerio's variations in front of different audiences at various venues. The inclusion of Vergerio's letters in praise of St. Jerome to the analysis of the orations will underline the significant effect of the epideictic

⁵ Petrarch, "To Posterity," trans. Anja Božič, *Keria: Studia Latina et Graeca* 19, no. 2 (2018): 227–33. <https://doi.org/10.4312/keria.19.2.227-233>.

⁶ Tomasini, Giacomo Filippo, *Petrarcha rediuius, integram poetæ celeberrimi vitam iconibus ære cælati exhibens. Accessit nobilissimæ feminae Lauræ brevis historia* (Padua: Pauli Frambotti 1650). Vergerio's "Vita Petrarcae" begins on p. 175.

⁷ For the locations of Vergerio's remaining sources see John M. McManamon, "Research Aids: Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder," <https://research.luc.edu/media/lucedu/history/pdfs/Vergerio%20Research%20Aids%20Database.pdf>.

genre regardless of the literary format. The presented inclusive research will also take in consideration Vergerio's frequent digressions, and identify his adaptations of classical patterns within the new sacred context. This multipronged approach will provide a revised image, not only of Vergerio's representation of St. Jerome but also of his program of alignment.

The *locus classicus* on the subject matter is John M. McManamon's edition and English translation of Vergerio's speeches.⁸ However, McManamon treats Vergerio's pieces holistically and chiefly from the angle of his construction of the humanist cult of St. Jerome. McManamon discusses Vergerio's innovative adaptations of the classical theory also in his monograph *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder: The Humanist as Orator*.⁹ The latter provides a review of Vergerio's lifelong rhetorical aspirations, while the edition of the orations offers their general summary with a focus on the humanist perception of St. Jerome. Unfortunately, what these two monographs do not offer is a link to illustrate Vergerio's work in the light of his efforts to innovatively align the rhetoric and the sacred contexts. Vergerio's digressions are mostly passed over in silence, and scant attention is given to his practice of adaptation to specific audiences. Nevertheless, they represent a valuable critical edition of Vergerio's work and provide information about the remaining manuscripts.

The thorough study by John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court*, demonstrates the development from the "traditional" thematic structure of the scholastic sacred rhetoric to the newly emerging "classical" form.¹⁰ It builds on a case study of Renaissance preachers in the second half of the fifteenth century and offers a useful methodology for analyzing epideictic orations. However, O'Malley mainly concentrates on differentiating the epideictic orations

⁸ John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome: An Edition and Translation of 'Sermones Pro Sancto Hieronymo'* (Tempe, AR: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999).

⁹ John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder: The Humanist as Orator* (Tempe, AR: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996).

¹⁰ O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, especially chapter 1.

from the thematic sermons, while, in contrast, the present thesis considers Vergerio's orations as epideictic from the starting point of the research. With that said, O'Malley's study has served as an invaluable source to review the continuing reformation of the sacred oratory initiated by Vergerio.

Considerable research has been done on later humanists' epideictic rhetoric in the sacred context. However, regarding classicizing oratory, the scholarship tends to focus on the funeral orations or the orations delivered in papal and other courts.¹¹ In this field, McManamon's studies on the funeral oratory are illuminating, as is O'Malley's case study of panegyrics to Aquinas.¹² Alison Frazier points out the typical humanist themes in treating saints in her monograph *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy*.¹³ She illustrates the tendency to select activities that corresponded to those of the humanists themselves as much as possible. The frequent choice of educated Church Fathers such as Jerome or Aquinas illustrates the preferences. McManamon's research regarding the classicizing funeral oratory set the stage to my analysis concerning the form of Vergerio's orations. Eugene Rice's book *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* proves to be of utmost relevance in manifold ways and concerning the cult of St. Jerome.¹⁴ Despite its primary focus on the cult's manifestations in art, it offers a set of convenient motifs for praise that also appear in Vergerio's orations. A valuable source for

¹¹ John M. McManamon, *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). For humanist oratory in secular context, Yun Lee Too and Niall Livingstone, eds., *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Classical Learning, Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹² John W. O'Malley, "Some Renaissance Panegyrics of Aquinas," *Renaissance Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1974): 174–92.

¹³ Alison Frazier, *Possible Lives: Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 213. Also Frazier, "Humanist Lives of Catherine of Siena: Latin Prose Narratives on the Italian Peninsula (1461–1505)," in *Catherine of Siena, Medieval Women. Texts and Contexts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

¹⁴ Eugene F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

Vergerio's biographical information is a detailed reconstruction by Michael Katchmer, presented in chapter I in his translation of Vergerio's comedy *Paulus*.¹⁵

Katchmer's bibliography is invaluable also owing to his references to Vergerio's letters. While treating Vergerio's approach to praise, his large *Epistolario* supplies another source material.¹⁶ Since Vergerio's letters have mostly been used as bibliographical sources, there is no complete translation of them, and these letters have never been treated as independent literary products either. The analysis in this thesis, however, will include three of Vergerio's letters concerned with St. Jerome. Their similarities to Vergerio's orations illustrate the application of the epideictic genre into various literary forms. The translation of the selected letters in the Appendix will contribute to a richer illustration of the analogies. In addition, it serves as a gesture to promote further research into Vergerio's epistolary style.

The thesis will thus address the following questions: How does the epideictic genre affect each of Vergerio's orations? Is it possible to define a typical outline of the orations? How does Vergerio develop the central patterns of the epideictic genre according to the individual delivery of the speech? How does Vergerio adapt the classical precepts to the sacred context and vice versa? What are the connecting features of Vergerio's public orations in honor of St. Jerome and his personal letters of praise? To answer these questions, the thesis will examine Vergerio's orations as a series of case studies and trace their outline, based on the schematic representation of the epideictic funeral orations. The scheme will serve as a filter to establish possible resemblances between them following their similar contexts. Vergerio's letters will be the subject of a comparative reading with the same focus. Such an approach integrates the

¹⁵ Michael Katchmer, *Pier Paolo Vergerio and the 'Paulus', a Latin Comedy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

¹⁶ Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Epistolario Di Pier Paolo Vergerio, a Cura Di Leonardo Smith*, ed. Leonardo Smith, *Fonti per la storia d'Italia: Epistolari, Secolo XIV-XV* (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1934).

pieces' formal characteristics, their rhetorical patterns, and, ultimately, their function—in light of the era's unifying “pursuit of eloquence.”¹⁷

The first chapter will provide a brief characterization of humanist epideictic orations in a sacred context. It will illuminate the innovations of the new period by bringing in parallel the thematic form of the medieval sermon with the new classicizing epideictic speech. This review will facilitate the explanation of the methodology of the analysis. The body chapter of the thesis offers a catalog of the orations' structured outlines, which serves as the point of departure for a detailed textual analysis. The analysis focuses on the alterations of the important rhetorical patterns, characteristic of the epideictic genre. Its objective is to establish links between the orations according to the specific contexts of their deliveries. Such in-depth reading is one of the thesis' main contributions to the study of these orations since it uncovers some hitherto unresearched affinities. As per its rigor and thoroughness, it examines the previously neglected items, for example, the incorporation of Jerome's letter to Eustochium into the orations, and Vergerio's references to his family's alleged cult of the saint. To illustrate the effect of the epideictic genre, the analysis also involves Vergerio's letters. Examining both literary forms in a parallel to each other, it points out the similar way in which Vergerio engages with the formation of the epideictic patterns in them. The final chapter connects the two most common perspectives on the orations, the cult of St. Jerome and Vergerio's rhetorical program, and points out his pioneer adaptations of the classical epideictic genre to the contemporary Christian context.

The originality of Vergerio's approach is not the only feature that makes his work a unique subject to examine, particularly from the comparative perspective. Fixating on Jerome as the subject of praise, I have been able to locate a set of epideictic orations that were

¹⁷ Hanna H. Gray, “Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4, no. 4 (1963).

composed throughout the fifteenth century. The subsequent one of these was delivered in 1410 in Padua by Nicolaus (Niccolò) Bonavia of Lucca.¹⁸ Soon after that, there was a similar oration in praise of St. Jerome in Siena, no later than in 1447, by Agostino Dati.¹⁹ None of them represents Jerome as the authors' personal patron, as does Vergerio. The following oration by Isotta Nogarola, delivered in Verona in 1453, uses the example of Jerome's life in a curious way: to subtly promote learning over the virtue of virginity.²⁰ Moreover, Giovanni Lamola gave a panegyric in Bologna in 1442,²¹ and Angelus Pergulensis (Angelo Dalla Pergola) delivered two panegyrics in Fermo in 1473 and 1474.²² A vernacular panegyric addressed to St. Jerome that combines the elements of classicizing oration, and a thematic sermon were produced by the famous Mariano da Genazzano before 1498.²³ However, unfortunately, none of these authors produced more than one oration in honor of St. Jerome. Vergerio's orations, therefore, offer a unique opportunity to inspect the variations of rhetorical approach according to the contexts of the orations' deliveries by the same author and in honor of the same subject. This fact confirms the choice of the methodological approach of focusing on distinctive

¹⁸ Biographical information about Bonavia is sparse. So far, the only detail I have been able to gather is that he was an erudite poet and at the time of delivering the oration, a student at the University of Padua. His oration is preserved in the Vatican Library, BAV Vat. lat. 5994 3r-7v and in Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 92 sup. 2, 13r-17r.

¹⁹ Agostino Dati, "Incipit Oratio prima de laudibus divi Hieronymi," in *Augustini dati senensis opera* (Siena, 1502), fol. 56b. The edition also contains Dati's vernacular speech to St. Jerome (fol. 123a). For a summary of his life, see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 33 (Rome, 1987), 15-21.

²⁰ The oration was pronounced as a public welcome of the new Veronese bishop Ermolao Barbaro. For English translation see Diana Maury Robin, Margaret L. King, "The Black Swan," in *Isotta Nogarola: Complete Writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations*, ed. Margaret L. King, Diana Maury Robin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 159-74.

²¹ "Laudatio Sancti Hieronymi" is preserved in Lucca, Biblioteca Governativa, MS 1394, fols. 173-75. Munich, Stadtbibliothek, MS Clm 504, fols. 243-44 and Clm 522, fols. 194-95. McManamon also mentions two anonymous orations in MS 1394 from Lucca, which I have not been able to reach. John M. McManamon, "Pier Paolo Vergerio (the Elder) and the Beginnings of the Humanist Cult of Jerome," *The Catholic Review* 71 (1985): 95, n. II.

²² Preserved in Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, MS IX F 49, fols. 59-68 (Kristeller, *Iter Italicum* I, 429 and VI, 248).

²³ David Gutiérrez, "Testi e note su Mariano da Genazzano (†1498)," *Analecta Augustiniana* 32 (1969), 117-204.

contexts in the present thesis. Additionally, the subsequent orations prove the popularity of the new format and the relevance of its further research.

When referring to the format of Vergerio's *Sermones*, the secondary scholarship employs different terminology. The expressions "sermon," "oration," "speech," and "panegyric" are used interchangeably. For the sake of distinguishing them from medieval thematic sermons, this thesis mostly avoids the word "sermon." The expression "humanist" (or classicizing) sacred oratory is the most general expression used in the secondary scholarship to denote any kind of oratory concerned with the topics of religious veneration and following the precepts of classical oratory.²⁴ For the present purposes, I will use it as an umbrella term for a group of literary species that could be practiced in different forms and addressing different religious subjects. While quoting the *Sermones*, I use McManamon's English translation unless otherwise indicated. The English translations of the letters are my own.

²⁴ Alison Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 213.

1. Breaking with tradition: Vergerio's orations as the first examples of humanist panegyrics to saints

Pier Paolo Vergerio's orations in honor of St. Jerome are considered as the earliest example of the classicizing sacred oratory and became the new and influential model for subsequent humanist orators.²⁵ In contrast to scholastic sermons of medieval origins, they employ the epideictic genre of ancient rhetoric rather than the thematic form of the speech. Applied to the orations addressed to Christian saints, this innovation affected not only the form but also the representation of the subject praised, and, accordingly, the orations' content. The importance of the oratory practice in the sacred context is further emphasized by Charles Trinkaus, who introduced the term "rhetorical theology."²⁶ Discussing these orations, it is therefore necessary to start with their rhetorical design rather than their role within religion or theology.

Since secondary scholarship has previously treated the orations holistically, the content of Vergerio's singular orations has not been analyzed in much depth. McManamon's studies present it as a product of new oratory, yet serving the humanists' revised image of St. Jerome.²⁷ This attitude is emphasized even by Rice's monograph on the cult of St. Jerome in the Renaissance.²⁸ In fact, despite their variety, no study treats Vergerio's orations separately.

²⁵ O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 86.

²⁶ Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970). O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 38.

²⁷ E.g. McManamon, "Pier Paolo Vergerio (the Elder) and the Beginnings of the Humanist Cult of Jerome," 353–71.

²⁸ Eugene F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

Nevertheless, subjecting them to a close reading separately, it is possible to discern Vergerio's public and almost didactic announcements of his novel approach.²⁹ In order to perceive Vergerio's novelty more clearly, this chapter will briefly present his transformation of the sacred oratory, and based on that, the methodological system of the analysis. The epideictic genre's effect will be pointed out also by comparing different literary formats.

I. 1. The revival of antique oratory

In order to understand the humanists' approach to the sacred oratory, a brief overview of the basic principles of ancient rhetoric is in order. The popular sources that were at least partly known to the educated medieval public were sections of Cicero's *De Oratore*, *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.³⁰ These entertained three genres: judicial, which was used to accuse or defend, usually in court; deliberative, which was usually used by politicians in an assembly such as the senate, in order to persuade the assembly to take some course of action; and epideictic, which was used to arouse sentiments of appreciation or disgust, or simply "to impose ideas on the audience without urging an action as its goal."³¹

²⁹ This fits into Vergerio's educational program nicely. His most popular text was, in fact, a pedagogical guide *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis adolescentiae* (On noble character and liberal studies of youth, ca. 1402). Besides moral philosophy, he promoted rhetoric, poetry, and the seven liberal arts.

³⁰ Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 284. At first, the Renaissance orators had little contact with the textual or living tradition of the epideictic oratory in the Roman East. This of course changed markedly after the arrival of the Byzantine orators to Italy which "spurred the practice of epideictic forms already in use in Italy." McManamon, *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 22. For the effect of Byzantine oratory on Renaissance see for example Kenneth M. Setton "The Byzantine Background to the Italian Renaissance." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical society, 1956).

³¹ O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 39, referring to Cicero, *Rhetorica ad herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (1954).

Despite the intuitive convenience of the deliberative style for practical purposes such as public preaching, humanist orators employed the epideictic genre. The motivation was in the era's universal "pursuit of eloquence."³² For the humanists, true eloquence emerged through the harmony of wisdom and style. Since the aim to attain an immediate action was absent in the epideictic genre, its main target was chiefly to display these two features.³³ Consequently, the aesthetic quality of the genre was emphasized, thus making it remarkably appropriate for humanists' stylistic pursuits. As summarized by Burgess:

The hearer is to gain pleasure, at least, if not information. The style is the most distinctive feature. [...] Since the appeal is to the emotions more than to the intellect, form is of greater importance than subject-matter. A tendency to ornament of every kind is fostered, and there is too little regard as to whether it be legitimate or not. Even truth may be disregarded in the interests of eloquence.³⁴

Moreover, lack of a fixed (legal or political) case to build on opened the way to innovation. However, the classical theory provided sets of *topoi*, typical topics to be selected and developed according to the singular subject and circumstance of the speech. In orations to great individuals, these topics were usually catalogs of their virtues, supported by their achievements and deeds.³⁵ To emphasize their exceptionality, comparisons could be applied. In search of suitable parallels, the genre took from history and devised exaggerated comparisons or fictional augmentations. The chief intention of the speech was, therefore, to display the moral character

³² "[I]t is essential to understand the humanists' reiterated claim that theirs was the pursuit of eloquence. That claim, indeed, reveals the identifying characteristic of Renaissance humanism. The bond which united humanists, no matter how far separated in outlook or in time, was a conception of eloquence and its uses. Through it, they shared a common intellectual method and a broad agreement on the value of that method." Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," 498.

³³ Thus in agreement with the etymological derivation of the word. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*. Burgess's book is an older but concise study of ancient epideictic oratory. For recent studies on late antique and Byzantine Greek epideictic rhetoric see Malcolm Heath, *Hermogenes On Issues: Strategies of Argument in Later Greek Rhetoric* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), *Menander: A Rhetor in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). General discussion is also available in George Alexander Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

³⁴ Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*, 39.

³⁵ John M. McManamon, "The Ideal Renaissance Pope: Funeral Oratory from the Papal Court," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 14 (1976), 19.

of the subject that is praised. While describing the category of the epideictic, Cicero, for example, includes *descriptiones* and *historiae*.³⁶ In this manner, the selected *topoi* could be further developed in order to increase the positive attitude of the audience by creating an emotional effect. They served to convey a captivating portrait that could be easily imagined, identified with, and appropriated. Accordingly, the selection of the *topoi* and their patterns depended on the disposition of the audience as well as the message that the orator wanted to convey. The context, therefore, carried more weight in the representation of the praised subject than the subject itself.

I. 2. From the thematic form to the epideictic genre in the sacred oratory

To illustrate the contrast between the humanist funeral orations that also employ the classical epideictic genre,³⁷ and the previous thematic form of the medieval scholastic sermons, John McManamon gives a detailed comparison of the two.³⁸ The thematic sermon was not the only preaching style employed in the Middle Ages, yet it was most commonly used among the educated public, and it contrasts the epideictic genre of classical oratory most conspicuously.³⁹ One of the main differences between them is the use of syllogisms. While the epideictic oration anticipates the agreement of the audience, the thematic sermon tends to raise questions and

³⁶ *Orator* 37–42. See also Kathy Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 20.

³⁷ Funeral oration is “a species within a genre of epideictic rhetoric,” originally an eulogy for a politician, delivered at his funeral. O’Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 37.

³⁸ McManamon, “The Ideal Renaissance Pope” 21–24.

³⁹ E.g. it rivalled the classicizing orations at the papal court. O’Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 43.

prove one's answer. It has much in common with the deliberative oratory, and it aims to teach rather than to move and please the audience.

Another obvious distinction of the medieval thematic sermon is its formal structure. Indisputably, it begins with a quotation from the Scripture, which is considered as the theme of the speech.⁴⁰ The quotation is followed by a brief passage in order to capture the audience's attention, and a prayer, invoking divine help for the preacher and the audience. Afterward, the theme is repeated and interpreted through a summary. This is followed by an announcement of the tri-partite division, preferably in correspondence with the three most important words of the theme. Each of the subthemes could be further developed through arguments and examples, evolving into an item in itself. A brief closing recapitulation (peroration) of the speech may come in conclusion.

Returning to the epideictic oratory, unity is one of the main qualities of an eloquent speech. The form of the humanists' classicizing orations is, therefore, more flexible than that of the thematic one. It omits the obligatory quote from the Bible, consequently abandoning the development and subdivision of its theme. Only a loose structure can be defined, illustrated by the typical layout that McManamon establishes for humanist funeral speeches.⁴¹ It opens with an *exordium*, stating that praising distinguished deceased citizens is the duty of public life. It is followed by the customary statement of the author's inadequacy in the subject. The body of the oration consists of a biography of the deceased, stressing their innumerable public and private virtues, deeds, and vast learning. In the *peroratio* the author contemplates the grief felt for the deceased and encourages the audience to imitate his merits.

⁴⁰ McManamon, "The Ideal Renaissance Pope" 23.

⁴¹ Ibid, 26. referring to Alfredo Galletti, *L'eloquenza (Dalle origini al xvi. secolo)*, Storia dei generi letterari Italiani (Milano: Francesco Vallardi, 1938), 568–69, 92–93.

Since no study is dedicated exclusively to the humanists' classicizing orations to saints, and since their structure resembles the funeral ones regarding their outer form, McManamon's scheme seems suitable for our purpose, too. However, there is an important aspect in the context of the epideictic orations to saints, which sharply contrasts the thematic sermons. The primary purpose of the epideictic orations is to display achievements and deeds. To put it differently: these orations aim to praise what is known to men; the "actions that are interpreted as actions for us men."⁴² As O'Malley points out: "In practice this means that the sermons [...] evince a tendency to look upon scripture more as a history of God's actions and less as a manual of doctrinal-proof texts or a book of artfully disguised philosophical principles."⁴³

Consequently, in epideictic orations, the didactic tendency of scholastic thematic sermons is withdrawn, and there is no need for syllogisms. Instead, these orations closely follow Horace's adage "Ut pictura, poesis," right to its origins in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.⁴⁴ The orators strove to stage stories and scenes from the Bible, using illustrative and commonly known imagery. The works and deeds were not introduced to motivate a dispute, but rather to offer the audience a visual conception of the oration's content. What was beyond comprehension was simply to be left out. In Vergerio's orations, such an orientation is highly discernible. In Sermon 5, for example, he includes a vivid description of St. Jerome. To illustrate Jerome's tolerance, he recalls the Parable of the Weeds from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which formed the audience's common knowledge.⁴⁵ He craftily avoids speaking

⁴² O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 49.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ O'Malley summarizes how the analogy between the art and words shows in the orations on the papal courts. Ibid, 43–45.

⁴⁵ Or the Parable of the Tares, Mtt. 13:24–30. The reference has a double meaning, since it was Jerome's interpretation of it that brought it the peaceful echo. Michael D. Barbezat, "Fields and Bodies," in *Burning Bodies: Communities, Eschatology, and the Punishment of Heresy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Michael D. Barbezat (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 37–40. The connection between Matthew and Jerome is also typical owing to Jerome's *Commentary to Matthew*.

of Jerome's miracles, promising to delve into the theme at the close of the oration, but then, appealing to their abundance or unattainability, wholly omitting them:

But I just remembered that the outline I gave you early on indicated that I would address some of the more celebrated miracles that Jerome worked as I neared the end of the sermon. Since all those miracles are extremely worthy of note and I would not be able to control my enthusiasm and simply treat a few of them, I will pass them over in silence and simultaneously bring things to close.⁴⁶

Despite numerous remarks of Jerome's miracles throughout his panegyrics, Vergerio finally recounts only two miraculous events. Referring to the late fifteenth-century rhetoric manual by Aurelio Brandolini, O'Malley summarizes this way:

He [the orator] was not trying to expound these mysteries as in a classroom, nor was he trying to refute heretical adversaries to them. By his orthodox yet attractive presentation, he was trying to move his listeners to wonder, to love, to admiration and to praise. He ascended to the pulpit to celebrate the truth, not to prove it.⁴⁷

Accordingly, the contents of the orations to saints no longer focused on their miraculous performance. They still take place, yet do not serve as primary indicators of sanctity. On the contrary, the standard catalog of the saint's virtues and deeds served to portray a figure in conformity with present preferences. In the humanist context of "rhetorical theology," the application of the epideictic genre thus transformed the sacred oratory into active promotion of the civic needs as well as a display of skilled oratory. "Practice strove to correspond to theory," concludes O'Malley, and the representation of the saint corresponded to the singular purpose of the author and the context of the oration's delivery.⁴⁸ The two described forms could naturally overlap; therefore, to a certain extent, the teaching or deliberative component may emerge. Yet, its goal was to pass an exhortation, supported by an emotional appeal. Rather than

⁴⁶ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 192–93.

⁴⁷ O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 45. A. Brandolini Lippi, *F. Aurelii Brandolini de ratione scribendi libri tres (etc.) prodeunt longe quam antehac emendatiores; cum novo indice. Accessit eiusdem Lippi oratio de Passione Domini habita coram Alexandri vi. An. 1496* (Typis Rochi Bernabo, 1735).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

to provoke action or decision, it aimed to convince the audience to imitate—not so much the praised subject, but rather the author’s praise.⁴⁹

1. 3. Problems of categorization and methodological approach

O’Malley’s weighty conclusion thus supports the initially stated importance of acknowledging the precepts of the epideictic rhetoric genre. The significance of the eloquent display should be clear from what was described above. The absence of a defined function makes the epideictic genre challenging to categorize. Its adaptability to the audience enabled the orations to be delivered in front of a varied public. Some of Vergerio’s orations, for example, were delivered in monasteries, some in churches, some at the papal court. Since the ceremonial character of the epideictic style widened their scope, these orations were suitable for a range of solemn occasions.⁵⁰ They were not necessarily pronounced *inter missarum solemna*, during the holy mass, but may have been delivered at any kind of solemn public ritual, even at partly secular festivities and other civic gatherings.⁵¹ Thus, they transgress the category of the so-called “sacred” oratory, yet cannot be denoted only as “ceremonial.”

Nevertheless, the orations remain similar regarding their classicizing epideictic style; what changes is the application of the typical *topoi*, the examples, and the parallels through which the representation of the praised subject is shaped. McManamon’s outline of funeral orations is informative as far as it illustrates the exterior form of a classicizing epideictic

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 73.

⁵¹ A number of epideictic orations to saints were delivered in councils, for example, at the Councils of Basel and Constance. McManamon, “Pier Paolo Vergerio (the Elder) and the Beginnings of the Humanist Cult of Jerome,” 370, referring to Tomaso Kaeppli, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, vol. 4, part 2 (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1970), 485.

speech. Nevertheless, no closer study exists about its application in the orations in honor of saints. O'Malley's exhaustive study of the orations at the papal court is useful, but it deals with the orations on a variety of subjects. Moreover, these orations addressed a selected audience—the distinguished society of ecclesiastical eminences, while Vergerio's were delivered in various settings. In the following chapter, I will show how the characteristics of the epideictic genre appear depending on the audience and venue of Vergerio's singular orations. On these grounds, I will devise structured outlines similar to McManamon's draft for funeral orations, yet in this case, for the orations to saints. A structure based on the orations by a sole author naturally does not suffice to define a form. Nevertheless, despite the present limitations, the outline is expected to be an inspiring starting point for further research.

The considerable effect of the epideictic genre can also be observed by a comparison of the distinctive literary formats to which it is applied. Since the ancient classical theory followed a different categorization of literature, the epideictic genre was not limited to the oratory.⁵² Ancient Greek literature already exploited its aesthetical component by applying it to various literary formats, above all, to poetry. Moreover, as noted by Burgess, authors in the early Christian era employed the epideictic genre, particularly in letters: “The stylistic letter is a form used extensively by almost all the Church fathers. They are in much the same oratorical lines as among the Greeks.”⁵³

Despite the curiosity of the connection owing to the oratory's adversarial nature regarding privacy, the humanist authors embraced the epideictic genre and employed it in various literary formats.⁵⁴ Due to their focus on eloquence and especially their attention to an

⁵² Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*, 184.

⁵³ “Even the treatises like Augustine's *De Patientia*, *De Amicitia*, and Apollinaris' *De Fide*, Tertullian's *De Fuga*, Basil's homilies *Envy*, *Anger* etc., have their Greek forerunners in similar topics.” Ibid, 186. Jerome also wrote stylistic letters. Hans Belting, “St. Jerome in Venice: Giovanni Bellini and the Dream of Solitary Life,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 17, no. 1 (2014): 7.

⁵⁴ Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 2.

individual addressee, the humanist letters present an extremely convenient format for the application of the genre. The connection is further reflected in the context of sacred oratory, since the first Renaissance instructions about public praise to saints were found in Brandolini's handbook—not on oratory but letters.⁵⁵ Brandolini's work aimed to transfer the guidance of the classical oratory to letter writing, drawing also from the contemporary practice at the papal court.

In this way, the epideictic character enables the proximity of the two formats. Consequently, similar epideictic rhetorical patterns and tropes are discernible regarding the orations and letters. The typical characteristics of the epideictic genre are most conspicuous in the letters of introduction, consolatory letters, laudatory letters, congratulatory letters, reprehensive letters, reproaching letters, letters of blame, and letters of thanks.⁵⁶ Their similarities to epideictic orations, especially while treating the same subject, illustrate adherence to analogous guidance. The collection of Vergerio's letters, for example, contains three letters that include praise of St. Jerome, employing the same topics and a similar structure as Vergerio's epideictic orations.⁵⁷ Moreover, there are his other letters, addressed to Vergerio's contemporaries that refer to St. Jerome in a resembling manner. Vergerio's subtle awareness of the classical epideictic guidance reflects from both formats that he employed—adhering, above all, to the eloquence.

⁵⁵ Brandolini's handbook is titled *De ratione scribendi* and was written around 1485. The instructions are included in the subsection "Diis laudandis". Frazier, "The First Instructions on Writing About Saints: Aurelio Brandolini (C. 1454–1497) and Raffaele Maffei (1455–1522)," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 48 (2003).

⁵⁶ Burgess, *Epideictic Literature*, 187.

⁵⁷ Namely letters 42, 78 79. Two are addressed to his father, and one to his childhood friend Sancto Pelegrino. Remigio Sabbadini, *Epistolario Di Guarino Veronese*, *Miscellanea Di Storia Veneta* (Venice: Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria, 1915), 91–93, 184–87.

2. Framing the orations

Regardless of the publication and translation by McManamon, Vergerio's orations have been treated rather negatively. The source *Oxford Bibliographies*, for example, conveys the typical presumption of secondary literature: "The speeches are somewhat repetitive and simplistic, but they constitute an important source for the humanist study of Jerome."⁵⁸ Accordingly, the orations have usually been investigated holistically, focusing on the humanists' revised image of St. Jerome as a learned translator and orator. Only scant attention has been taken of other, unrelated elements, nor were the orations viewed as independent compositions. Not a single study has ever engaged with Vergerio's orations separately and from the viewpoint of the epideictic oratory. In contrast, departing from the overview in the previous chapter, the following analysis will take the main patterns of the epideictic genre for the chief variables of the research.

Vergerio indeed employs the standard attributes of St. Jerome and repeatedly refers to them in every oration. However, owing to the new form, he avoids the usual catalogs and intersperses them throughout the entire contents of the orations, arranged in the unified compositions of classical panegyrics. Reading the orations as individual pieces as a series of case studies, it is possible to devise a standard outline for each oration. In this manner, the present chapter will delve more in-depth than the previous examinations and initially spread out the contents of the orations in order to trace their outlines. Such a representation will prove that the criticized repetitiveness derives from Vergerio's close consideration of the epideictic guidance and not their simplicity. Additionally, this didactic representation of the outlines will serve as the starting point of the analysis. Since the epideictic genre primarily focuses on the

⁵⁸ Craig Kallendorf, "Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder," *Oxford Bibliographies*, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0306.xml>.

audience, the research will aim to establish possible resemblances of the orations delivered to the same public.

2. 1. Methodology

As noted in the previous chapter,⁵⁹ the present analysis is based upon McManamon's outline of (epideictic) funeral orations.⁶⁰ McManamon suggests that such an oration usually consists of three main parts: 1) the *exordium*, 2) biography, and 3) *peroratio*. In 1) the *exordium* or introduction, the orator states his purpose and affirms that it is a civic duty to anyone's community. Moreover, he declares his inadequacy to deal with the theme, claiming either that the subject of his praise has too many qualities to be embraced in a singular oration or that the orator's inferiority prevents him from even touching upon such a great topic. Then follows 2) the body of the oration, which customarily consists of biography and catalog of the virtues and deeds of the praised subject, often in the chronological order. Finally, the oration closes with 3) the *peroratio* or conclusion. Here the orator overviews his speech and reflects upon its contents. Usually, it includes also an encouragement to imitate the praised subject's virtues and a prayer.

The following overview will observe the way Vergerio's orations are arranged according to this scheme and how they vary owing to the context. It will inspect the contents of the three main parts of the orations and examine how Vergerio employs the typical epideictic *topoi* and tropes. Limiting the focus, the analysis will concentrate primarily on his justification of praise as a duty and his ways to express inadequacy. These are usually also the parts where Vergerio's comments on his novel form are most frequent. Each of the orations will be examined following McManamon's scheme to illustrate their outlines. Another more detailed

⁵⁹ See Chapter 1. 3.

⁶⁰ McManamon, "The Ideal Renaissance Pope" 26.

method is offered by O'Malley, who analyzed the orations at the papal court at the end of the fourteenth century.⁶¹ However, even though O'Malley's analysis also includes orations to the saints, his system was devised primarily to distinguish the epideictic orations from the thematic sermons. In contrast, the present study looks upon Vergerio's orations as epideictic from the starting point. The three structural parts of McManamon's outline will be complemented by an additional category in each outline: the context of the delivery of the oration.

A close reading of the orations, based on their outlines, will show that the epideictic patterns also vary according to the specific contexts of the orations' deliveries, thus affecting the contents of the speeches. On these grounds, the following chapter will present a rigorous textual analysis. Vergerio's orations will be grouped and inspected according to their audience or the venue. The analysis will discuss their consequent concordance using the standard humility tropes and justifications of praise as everyone's duty as filters. Moreover, employing the same filters, they will parallel the letters to the orations and highlight the affinities of the two formats, induced by the same handling of the patterns, characteristic of the epideictic genre.

The research keeps in line with the original label of the orations as they appear in the manuscripts, namely *sermo*. For the sake of distinction from the thematic sermons described in the first chapter, the expression "sermon" is avoided in other cases. As stated, the expressions "oration," "speech," and "panegyric" are used interchangeably. Vergerio himself refers to his speech either as *sermo* or *oratio*.⁶²

⁶¹ O'Malley's approach focuses on six main points: 1) Latin style (lyrical quality, exclamations, stylistic ornaments), 2) sources (for historical facts, the hypertext of the quotes), 3) structure (typical *topoi*), 4) unity (invisible division into subthemes, all subordinated to a single goal), 5) *res* (content), 6) purpose (the reason for composition, possible political intention). O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 36–76.

⁶² An interesting observation is that in the opening remarks of the speeches he uses the expression *sermo* in most cases, while later on he also uses *oratio*. The cases, when he uses *oratio* are most frequently the humility tropes, often paraphrased on the examples of classical authors. Mixed terminology is another indicator of the humanist combining approach. I am grateful to Katalin Szende for inspiring me to reflect more deeply on Vergerio's own usage of Latin terms.

2. 2. Context and order of orations

Vergerio began his public speaking career in Padua around 1390. Judging by his three public speeches delivered at that time, he seemed to associate himself with the Carrara family.⁶³ Although the exact start of Vergerio's annual orations in honor of St. Jerome cannot be dated, he must have begun this tradition around the same time. In Sermons 5 and 8, and in one of his letters, Vergerio explains that his inspiration to praise Jerome derives from his family's ancient tradition and claims of having personal experience of Jerome's sanctity.⁶⁴ On these grounds, he vows to annually deliver a public oration in the saint's honor on his feast-day. His vow is often referred to at the beginning of the *exordia*.

In letter 42, Vergerio states that his practice started four years before.⁶⁵ If Smith's dating of the letter to the years 1392–1394, more probably to 1394, is correct, Vergerio possibly delivered his first oration in 1390. The exact order of the orations remains unknown. I use the numbering and sequence of delivery suggested in McManamon's edition, which, due to different manuscript referencing, differs from the one used earlier by Robey and Smith. Three of the orations were delivered in monastic environments (1, 5, 10), and two were delivered close to Vergerio's hometown in Istria (3, 6).⁶⁶ Two of the orations are dated in the manuscripts:

⁶³ There is no evidence of any public activity before this time. These early speeches are Vergerio's defense of Carrara's lieutenant Bartolomeo Cermisone before Francesco Novello (1390–1392), an oration celebrating Francesco Novello's recovery of Padua (1392) and the well-known funeral oration for Francesco Carrara the Elder (1393). Katchmer, *Pier Paolo Vergerio and the 'Paulus'*, 15.

⁶⁴ Ep. 79, addressed to his father. See Appendix and Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 186–87.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 91.

⁶⁶ Roby admits the possibility that more of the orations were delivered to an audience of monks in contrast with McManamon, who assumes a monastic environment only for the three orations containing specific reference. However, Robey does not specify which orations he had meant. David Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values in the Work of an Early Humanist," *Past&Present* 58 (1973), 37.

Sermon 5 to 1392, and oration 9 to 1408. Sermon 8 can be dated to the year 1406 based on internal evidence.⁶⁷

2. 3. Recurring events from Jerome's life and their order

As Vergerio refers only to selected events from Jerome's biography, the following crude history provides necessary information about his life.⁶⁸ In his *De Viris Illustribus*, St. Jerome states that he was born in Stridon, on the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia, around 345, to Christian parents.⁶⁹ He spent the first part of his life in Rome, where he received a rigorous classical education, following the lessons of the celebrated grammarian Aelius Donatus. In addition to his ardor for classical literature, Jerome also became an intent Christian and received baptism. After completing his studies, he spent some time traveling. He also became drawn to monasticism while staying in Trier. Later, he probably visited his birthplace and continued to Aquilea, where he got acquainted with a group of ascetic intellectuals on the way to the East. After their departure, he decided to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Arriving at Antioch, he spent some time staying with the renowned Christian priest Evagrius and worked on his knowledge of Greek. He suffered a severe illness, during which he had the famous dream about his trial in front of the celestial tribunal. In his dream, he was accused of being a Ciceronian, one of Cicero's followers, due to his keen interest in classical literature. To repent, he spent four years as a hermit in the desert of Chalcis and vowed never

⁶⁷ The reference about the death of Vergerio's father. Ibid, 27.

⁶⁸ For a detailed biography see John N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper&Row, 1975).

⁶⁹ Saint Jerome, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. Frederick Adam Wright, Loeb Classical Library 262 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 167.

again to possess a book by a pagan author.⁷⁰ In addition to other events, Jerome also survived a confrontation with a desert lion, in which he washed out the lion's wound caused by a thorn in its paw. Because of Jerome's kindness, the lion was tamed and remained with the monks.⁷¹ Jerome's stay in the desert, however, was also spent in intellectual labor since he took with him his library and studied Greek and Hebrew. Among other works, he also wrote about the lives of the desert fathers.

Afterward, Jerome once more resided with Evagrius in Antioch, together with some other intellectuals, among which was also the famous Gregory Nazianzus, to whom Jerome ascribed as a student of Greek and the scriptures. In that period, he was also ordained. On the request of Pope Damasus, he then returned to Rome (in 382) to revise the Latin Bible by comparing it to the Greek original. In Rome he was highly regarded due to his knowledge and was on the verge of becoming the new pope. Nevertheless, due to his criticism of the extravagance and corruption of the Roman clergy and his promulgation of ascetics, Jerome obtained also numerous critics and rivals. To avoid more opposition, he decided to leave Rome and settle in a monastery that he and his followers had established in Bethlehem. There he continued his religious practice and his scholarly work until his death.

Most medieval writers had limited access to Jerome's biographical information, which they gathered mostly out of his letters.⁷² These were naturally greatly affected by Jerome's self-stylization. Also, their chronological order was corrupt, and until the end of the sixteenth century, authors followed the common bibliographic account that they gathered from Jerome's

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*, 32.

⁷¹ Which was later also denoted as miracle and bore an allegorical meaning of Christian baptism. The sources do not describe Jerome removing the thorn, but only that after it was tended to, the lion recovered immediately. Hilmar M. Pabel, *Herculean Labours: Erasmus and the Editing of St. Jerome's Letters in Renaissance* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 185.

⁷² For critical reading of Jerome's letters, Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

writings.⁷³ They were unaware of Jerome's return to Rome, and thus all the Roman events were placed in the period during his studies. Accordingly, in Rome, Jerome acquired his education and became a priest, then left for the East, first to Gregory Nazianzus, and then to Syria, where he stayed until his death. The three places also adhered to Jerome's many statuses in Christian faith, as Vergerio puts in his most common summarization of Jerome's deeds:

By his preaching he was an apostle, an evangelist by his writing, he was a hermit by his choice of dwelling, and if we define martyrdom in terms of suffering, he was a martyr throughout his entire life; he was a teacher not just in words but also in his exemplary deeds, and he was renowned not only by his eloquence, but by his entire life.⁷⁴

For Jerome's departure from Rome, the writers often blamed his rivals, hinting at the "traps" they set for him, for example, planting a woman's dress in his bedroom to accuse him of immoral conduct.⁷⁵ Moreover, Jerome's refusal of the pontificate was interpreted as being due to his modesty. The sources are careful to always add that Jerome did not leave Rome because of fear of his adversaries or even a sense of guilt. Vergerio, for example, justifies it as "for the salvation of his enemies" in Sermon 3, and in Sermon 6, since Jerome realized that staying would be of little use.⁷⁶

There were also famous miracles attributed to St. Jerome. In light of his new approach, however, Vergerio only describes two Jerome's miracles at length. One of them was a story about two Roman travelers who were fleeing Constantinople to go to Jerusalem since they were wrongly accused of murder. As they were attacked by a band of thieves, Jerome protected them by creating the illusion that there were more men than just the two of them. The fear made the bandits join the travelers, and upon their arrival in Jerusalem, the former bandits reformed

⁷³ Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, 25–26.

⁷⁴ Ep. 78. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 184.

⁷⁵ This episode was added by Jacobus da Voragine. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 16.

⁷⁶ There is no further explanation. Vergerio might interpret that Jerome departed from Rome in order to avoid provoking his rivals, and hence relieve them of their mischievous scheming.

themselves to lead a better lifestyle. The Romans entered a monastery. Vergerio, however, transmits the story differently, transforming the pilgrims on their way to Bethlehem into pagans, traveling to see Jerome's tomb. Moreover, he asserts that once the robbers had abandoned their evil intentions, they joined the travelers with the same goal.⁷⁷

The other miracle Jerome refers to, is St. Augustine's vision of Jerome's death. The narrative comes from a forged letter of St. Augustine. The author recalls sitting in his cell an hour before sunset, contemplating fame and fortune of the saints. While grabbing a pen to write a letter about it to St. Jerome, there was sudden lighting, and an image of the latter, who told Augustine that the bliss is impossible to describe had one not experienced it. The vision revealed to him that it was Jerome's hour of death. Again, Vergerio's report is different from the sources.⁷⁸ Firstly, he argues the reliability of Augustine's testimony, since "he did not know how to lie."⁷⁹ Then he adds that other holy men "used the utterly reliable assistance of their spiritual senses to see Jerome's soul accompanied by angels, a fitting escort who carried his soul to a blessed seat in the heavens."⁸⁰ The description is curious since the Pseudo-Augustine letter writes of Jerome's soul ascending to heaven alone. The multitude of later iconographic motives paint Jerome's soul by itself and not carried by the angels. Vergerio's other most frequently used sources are Jacobus da Voragine and Giovanni d'Andrea.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Sermon 8. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 219–33.

⁷⁸ McManamon provides a footnote referring to Pseudo-Eusebius' "Epistola de morte," Pseudo-Augustine's "Epistola magnificentia" and Giovanni d'Andrea's *Hieronymianum*. Ibid, 195. Yet, it is only Pseudo-Eusebius that conveys similar account. As summarized by Rice, Eusebius's forged letter reports of Cyril of Jerusalem's vision, how Jerome's soul ascended from the monastery in Bethlehem to heaven in escort of angels, holding candles and singing sweetest melodies. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, 52.

⁷⁹ "[I]ta enim scribit is ipse qui nescit mentiri [...]" McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 193–94.

⁸⁰ "[M]ulti sanctissimi viri viderunt vera certaque animi et sensuum praesentia comitatam angelis, ut par erat, ferri in beatam caelorum sedem, digna premia, quibus tanta integritas vitae honaretur." Ibid, 194–95.

⁸¹ For more information about the usual sources see the third chapter, "The Cult," in Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*.

Vergerio often includes lengthy quotes from Jerome's famous letter to Eustochium.⁸² In it, Jerome describes both his "Ciceronian" dream and his ascetic practice in the desert, as this is a letter of one depicting his extreme endurance through fasting, overpowering bodily temptations, and constant prayer. Later, the letter became the one most frequently copied and quoted out of all of Jerome's letters and was also included in monastic breviaries. Moreover, it served as part of the medieval *officium* of St. Jerome.⁸³ Vergerio's inclusion of the letter's excerpts is therefore not surprising; its incorporation into classical orations nicely indicates the merging of both contexts.⁸⁴ When Vergerio also refers to some other more detailed events of some importance, these will be explained in the context of the analysis.

⁸² Ep. 22. 7, 11. Saint Jerome, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, 52–159. Eustochium was, together with her mother Paula, an intent follower of St. Jerome.

⁸³ The *officium* was composed of three parts: a hymn to Jerome, his life, and an excerpt from his letter to Eustochium. Vesna Badurina-Stipčević, "Legenda o Jeronimu u starijoj hrvatskoj književnoj tradiciji" [Jerome's legend in old Croatian literary tradition]. *Hagiographia Slavica* 82 (2013): 22.

⁸⁴ In contrast, Robey interprets it as Vergerio's call for abnegation and abandonment of the world. Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values," 25. Robey identifies ascetics for the leading theme of Vergerio's orations. He describes the entire corpus of the orations as illustrative of Vergerio's ceasing enthusiasm for the *vita activa civilis*, which he promoted elsewhere. However, the fact that the letter to Eustochium was a standard part of the *officium* and the appearances of all Jerome's attributes seems to speak against Robey's interpretations.

2. 4. Outlines of the orations

SERMON I

The oration was delivered in front of the monks who followed the rule of Benedict.⁸⁵ Vergerio addresses them as *reverendissimi patres fratresque carissimi*. There is no dating, yet the oration could not have been the first one since Vergerio starts by a rather bold statement of being “in the habit of delivering a sermon, *sermonem*, each year.”⁸⁶ The practice is referred to as a “duty,” *munus*. The oration has a distinguishable main topic: imitation of St. Jerome’s modest piety.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise as duty is based on the monks’ imitation of Jerome’s piety. St. Jerome pertains in a special way to the monks, and they should celebrate him as the source of their examples. The statement of the orator’s inadequacy is missing. Instead, Vergerio sounds convinced of the audience’s desire to listen to the oration, which will also prompt him to speak in a pleasing style.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio continues with the topic of imitation: even Jerome described the lives of the Egyptian monks during his desert pilgrimage since he thought that descriptions of examples inspired their imitation.⁸⁷ Thusly, Jerome was not only creating examples for others but also endeavored to imitate them himself. In this manner, also he became an example, just like the monks he had described. Jerome always wrote about others, as if he had nothing of his own that others might want to imitate. He always considered himself the worst sinner and also the least talented one to learn.⁸⁸ His modest disposition towards his knowledge particularly enabled him to evolve into the most talented teacher.⁸⁹ Jerome refused the pontificate in Rome because he thought himself unworthy and instead went to the desert to repent his sins. Despite being universally considered as the most learned one, he traveled to Gregory of Nazianzus to learn from him.

3. *Peroratio*

The conclusion is abrupt and bears no reflection about the miracles. Vergerio closes with an appeal to God and the closing phrase.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ “Quibus quemadmodum Benedictus auctor fuit regulae, ita Hyeronimus exemplorum.”; “As Benedict was the source of your rule, so Jerome was the source of your examples.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 138–39. Sermon 5 was also undoubtedly delivered in front of the Benedictine monks.

⁸⁶ “Qui singulis annis glorioso doctore Beato Hieronymo in die dictate ei sollemnitate sermonem de laudibus facere consuevi.” Ibid, 137. Nevertheless, considering the genre, such a statement could also be a rhetorical trope.

⁸⁷ “[A]liena scribebat que ceteri posset imitari” Ibid, 138.

⁸⁸ This reference is unique in Vergerio’s orations so it cannot be precisely confirmed. In Sermon 9 Vergerio describes it as Plato’s position to learning, which was described in one of Jerome’s letters about Plato’s journeys in order to advance his knowledge, but no further explanation is given. Ibid, 141.

⁸⁹ “Dum se pauperem semper ad discendum credit, ad docendum locupletissimum se fecit.” Ibid, 140.

⁹⁰ In several manuscripts of Vergerio’s orations the scribes replaced the usual *explicit* with the Greek *τελλως*, which was at the time a popular practice. Vergerio’s exact words are unclear. Dieter Wuttke, “Telos als Explicit,” in *Das Verhältnis Des Humanisten Zum Buch*, ed. Fritz Kraft (Boppard: 1977), 47–62. For the list of such manuscripts of the orations see McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 58.

SERMON 2

The context of this oration is unknown. Vergerio's address of the audience as "most cherished brothers," *fratres carissimi*, suggests that it could also have been delivered in a monastic context, yet naturally, this does not suffice for sound judgment.⁹¹ Vergerio does not mention any previous orations; neither does the oration contain any direct appeal to St. Jerome as his personal saint.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise is based upon ancient tradition: by remembering the virtues of others and admiring them, one tends to be inspired to imitate them. Besides, even the pagans practiced celebrating birthdays of their loved ones; therefore, Christians should celebrate the feast days of their Doctors much more diligently. The expression of inadequacy is based upon the excessive number of Jerome's merits; Vergerio problematizes devising a satisfying panegyric to a saint. The typical comparison of conquering the earthly kingdoms and securing the celestial illustrates that in the second case, the triumph is considerably higher.⁹²

2. Body of the oration:

Vergerio praises Jerome firstly as an apostle and refers to the Parable of the Weeds.⁹³ Then Vergerio describes him as Doctor due to his translations and writings. Jerome also suffered constant persecution, because of which he had to leave malicious Rome. Then he studied under Gregory of Nazianzus; later, he resolved to go to the desert. By learning Jerome learned to teach the others, and by fleeing the city, he was able to benefit the whole world.⁹⁴

3. *Peroratio*

Since Jerome "could not find the humanity in his fellow human beings, he removed the ferocity from a truly ferocious animal," and tamed the lion in the desert. This was just one of his miracles, whose breadth is otherwise like a boundless expanse of the ocean—therefore, Vergerio should refrain from enumerating them to avoid prolonging the oration. He concludes with an appeal to the divine intercession of St. Jerome.

⁹¹ See sub chapter 2. Context and order of the orations and Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values," 37.

⁹² "At quanto maior est triumphus regna possidere caelestia, aeternum parasse imperium mundo calcato et immarescibilem gloriam iusto Dei iudicio quaesivisse." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*.

⁹³ Employing the Parable of the Weeds, Vergerio explains that Doctors continued the deeds of the apostles, since the Doctors secured the crop that the apostles sowed against the hurtful thorns and weeds of heresies. Curiously, Vergerio usually brings it up when referring to Jerome as the Doctor.

⁹⁴ "[G]regorio se discipulum praebuit ut ab eo disceret quod universe doceret. Fugit urbem ut orbi prodesset." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 148.

SERMON 3

The oration took place in the region of Istria, *proximo loco*, “nearby” Jerome’s hometown, as Vergerio states immediately at the beginning. There is no dating, and the audience is unknown as there is no direct address in the oration. Vergerio does not refer to any of his earlier speeches or his praise being an annual practice. He encourages the audience to accept St. Jerome as their patron saint, yet he does not invoke him as his patron.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise refers to the audience’s residence close to Jerome’s birthplace.⁹⁵ Vergerio compares the traditional illustrious deeds to Jerome’s sacred works to prove him even worthier of praise. The usual expression of inadequacy is missing.

2. Body of the oration

Through the Parable of the Weeds Vergerio praises Jerome as Doctor of the Church and describes Jerome’s beneficial attitude to the heretics as well as his rivals. Jerome always suffered persecution from the latter, who even planted a woman’s dress in his bedroom, because of which he decided to leave Rome—not because he was concerned for his reputation, but the salvation of his enemies. Then Jerome went to live in the desert, compared to which the Roman ordeals were trivial. A sentence from the letter to Eustochium follows.⁹⁶ Jerome practiced all kinds of virtues at all points of his life. He indisputably “surpassed nearly all the learned individuals who ever lived.”⁹⁷ Vergerio compares his eloquence with Cicero’s and explains Jerome’s “Ciceronian” dream.⁹⁸

3. *Peroratio*

Not only the austerity of Jerome’s life should be considered a miracle, but also the breadth of his erudition. Anyhow, the number of his miracles surpasses Vergerio’s abilities to praise them individually. This should convince the audience to accept St. Jerome as their patron among the saints they already worship. After this invocation, Vergerio appeals to God in his Trinity, and concludes the oration.

⁹⁵ “Maxime vero eos qui re[li]gionem istam incolunt singulari devotione convenit diem eius festum celebrare quando hinc proximo loco illud fidei nostrae praecipuum lumen exortum est.”; “Those Christians who inhabit this particular region have an even greater obligation to celebrate Jerome’s feast day with singular devotion since that exceptional light of our faith was born in a place nearby. Ibid, 150–51.

⁹⁶ Vergerio quotes merely the first sentence. Ibid, 154.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 156–57.

⁹⁸ “One can honestly say that his eloquence was so great that he practically equalled Cicero, whose books he read with the utmost attention [...]” “Eloquentia vero tanta ut Ciceronem cuius libros studiosissime legebat prope aequaret.” Ibid.

SERMON 4

The circumstances of this oration are unknown. The audience is addressed as *fratres carissimi*. Vergerio does not appeal to St. Jerome as his personal saint directly, yet the practice of the orations in his honor is reflected on immediately; as his custom and long-standing commitment, *pro more institutoque vetere*.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise is missing. The *exordium* is an extended expression of inadequacy, based on the comparison of praising worldly men and praising saints.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio inserts a complex parallel of the warfare and faith: first comparing one's enemies, then battles, and finally victories. Only conquering oneself is thoroughly rewarding, which is possible only by the complete disregard for all the worldly distractions. A long quotation from Jerome's letter to Eustochium follows to illustrate Jerome's endurance. Vergerio then praises Jerome's learning and his benevolence to the enemies and rivals, and even to bestial creatures.⁹⁹

3. *Peroratio*

Considering how much trouble and harassment Jerome had to suffer, one could "say that he took heaven by storm."¹⁰⁰ However, his most enormous miracle was, in fact, that he was able to make so many miracles.¹⁰¹ An appeal for Jerome's divine intercession and an invocation to the holy Trinity concludes the oration.

⁹⁹ The episode with the lion is only alluded to.

¹⁰⁰ "Quibus propemodum dici potest eum intulisse vim caelo." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 167–68.

¹⁰¹ "Cuius rei argumentum est quod et in vita et post mortem ita miraculis claruit, ut miraculum permagnum sit eum tot et tanta operatum esse miracula." Ibid, 168.

SERMON 5

In the manuscripts, this oration is dated to 1392, delivered in Padua to Benedictine monks. Although they are not addressed directly (only once as “*praestantissimi viri*”), Vergerio describes their daily activities. This is Vergerio’s most extended oration, and, because of his direct reference to his innovative rhetoric practice, it is unique. According to Robey, this oration may have been the earliest, since it does not refer to any previous speeches.¹⁰² Although Robey’s argument is based only on his opinion that the oration is relatively immature in style and hesitant in its approach to the subject, it is understandable.¹⁰³ The speech is indeed least coherent and often jumps between the topics.

1. *Exordium*

The oration opens with Vergerio’s accentuation of his choice to omit the usual biblical verse at the beginning of the sermon. The justification of praise as duty bases on tradition. Further on, Vergerio blames the contemporaries’ neglect of religious duties in contrast to the pagans. The expression of inadequacy is missing; Vergerio is confident of the audience’s interest due to the subject of the oration.

2. Body of the oration

In a first-person narrative, Vergerio inserts an emotional confession of his family’s devotion to St. Jerome. He blames the abundance of Jerome’s merits for confusing him and preventing him from starting the oration. He lists the possible topics: first Jerome’s learning and eloquence, then through the Parable of the Weeds his benevolence to all kinds of opponents, and finally his numerous writings, setting him above the other Doctors. After lengthy monologue about his inadequacy, he praises Jerome’s endurance. In another first-person narrative, Vergerio vividly portrays him based on his imagination, inspired by reading Jerome’s texts, which also animate him to imitate Jerome’s acts.¹⁰⁴ Due to his piety, Jerome left Rome despite his glory and retracted to the desert. The quotation from the letter to Eustochium follows and evolves into a convoluted comparison of conquering oneself to gaining victories in war.

3. *Peroratio*

Vergerio briefly remarks some of Jerome’s miracles (“beast tamed, the sick healed, the pilgrims protected, the persons raised from the dead”¹⁰⁵), and blames their abundance for the reason only to describe one: St. Augustine’s vision of Jerome’s soul being carried to heaven by angels. He concludes with an appeal to eternal God and Jerome’s intercession.

¹⁰² Robey, “P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values,” 37.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “[C]um scripta Hieronymi video, qua semper scribentis animum et mores redolent, confingo mihi mente virum cuius effigiem crebro in animum revoco.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 188–89.

¹⁰⁵ “[M]ansuefactas feras, validatos aegros, conservatos peregrinos, resuscitados denique a morte homines [...]” Ibid, 191–92.

SERMON 6

This oration was delivered in the region of Istria at an unknown date. Vergerio refers to the audience as living close to St. Jerome's earthly residence, *loco terrestri illius regionis vicini*, although there is no direct address to indicate their location.¹⁰⁶ Vergerio encourages them to accept St. Jerome as their patron saint but does not invoke him as his patron. He refers neither to earlier speeches nor to his praise as an annual practice. The main topic of the oration is the imitation of St. Jerome.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise as duty is based on tradition and the closeness of Jerome's birthplace. Vergerio points out the meaning of celebrating the saint's name days and summons the audience to celebrate St. Jerome's celestial birthday particularly. The expression of inadequacy is missing.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio rejects the local identification of the small village Stregna with Jerome's Stridon. The only real proximity to please the saints is the proximity of one's deeds to theirs; therefore, the audience should still imitate him. Jerome departed for Rome despite his love for his homeland, to become "better and more learned."¹⁰⁷ He was not concerned with his origins or temporary whereabouts, but much more with his destination in the afterlife.¹⁰⁸ He left Rome to avoid his rivals, studied at Gregory of Nazianzus, went to the desert to become God's soldier. A longer quotation from Jerome's letter to Eustichium follows. Vergerio again encourages his audience to imitate Jerome's humility, due to which, for example, he rejected the pontificate and became a desert monk. Besides that, he was most knowledgeable, yet he always kept learning regardless of the praise.

3. *Peroratio*:

Jerome's miracles are countless; therefore, it is "not possible to explain them in any detail, nor would it be possible even to mention them in passing."¹⁰⁹ Vergerio appeals to St. Jerome for his intercession and expresses hope to enjoy the divine company deservedly.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 196.

¹⁰⁷ "Patriaque Romam pertulit, non quia maior esset aut clarior, sed quia illa ad perficiendum eum magis erat idonea; quippe qui non illud potissimum quaerebat unde natus esset aut vitam ubi duceret sed quo post mortem esset arbiturus." Ibid, 198.

¹⁰⁸ "Non illud potissimum quaerebat unde natus esset aut votam ubi duceret, sed quo post mortem esset arbiturus." Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Nedum explicare sed nec vel attingere facile quisquam posset [...]" Ibid, 204.

SERMON 7

The context of this oration is unknown. The audience is addressed as “*praesantissimi patres*.” Vergerio does not appeal to St. Jerome as his personal saint, but he does refer to the practice of his orations. The reference is, however, not explicit and only introduced far into the central part of the oration.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise as duty is tradition. Through a catalog of possible praiseworthy deeds, Vergerio explains that even the pagans are praised for the examples they had left for their posterity to imitate. This should also animate the Christians to much higher praise and the imitation of the saints’ examples. The inadequacy statement is missing.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio compares the organization of a republic with faith, which leads to another list of praiseworthy deeds. Vergerio then argues that Jerome is praiseworthy for all the enumerated qualities. Based on the word’s Greek etymology, he emphasizes his role first as an apostle and then as a martyr. The quotation from the letter to Estochium follows. Vergerio then praises Jerome’s equally benevolent disposition to any kind of living being, particularly his enemies. Through the etymological interpretation of the name Hieronymus, Vergerio points out Jerome’s general exceptionality of all kinds.¹¹⁰ Then he passes to Jerome’s erudition.

3. *Peroratio*

Vergerio first accuses the multitude of Jerome’s miracles and his shortness of time as preventing him from describing them, yet still recalls one—how Jerome shielded two pilgrims against the group of thieves. He again emphasizes Jerome’s benevolence to everyone, and with an appeal to his divine intercession, concludes the oration.

¹¹⁰ Following Jacobus de Voragine and Giovanni d’Andrea’s interpretations as the “holy grove” or “judge of words.”

SERMON 8

This oration was delivered before the papal curia in Rome in 1406. The audience is not directly addressed, yet the manuscript sources are specific enough about the circumstance. It was probably the most renowned oration in the Renaissance since it was included as a biographical appendix to the first edition of Jerome's works published in Rome in 1468.¹¹¹ It is the most learned among the orations and was considered as advocacy of humanist studies by later Renaissance authors.¹¹² Vergerio confidently states that his orations in honor of St. Jerome are an annual practice of many years, referring to it as an obligation, *munus*. Vergerio's attachment to St. Jerome is expressed with extreme openness and is related to his recently deceased father, which makes the oration interesting as a biographical source.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise rests primarily on Vergerio's devotion, but also on his claim that praising saints spurs imitation. The inadequacy statement is based on the excellence of Jerome's merits, unattainable to anyone.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio first discusses the reasons for his feeling of inadequacy to render Jerome sufficient praise. He explains that he had learned of his loyalty concerning divine intercession through the example of his father, which makes him an heir to the tradition and intent to keep his integrity. Then he discusses human and celestial virtues, all of which Jerome possessed in an extraordinary manner and to an incomparable degree, because of which he is incomparable to anyone else. Jerome's holiness is proven already by the etymology of his name.¹¹³ Moreover, Vergerio explains Jerome's manifold role in the foundations of religion. He withdrew from Rome when offered the pontificate and endured the desert, which makes him a soldier against the world and the flesh. He wrote innumerable books and was incredibly eloquent. Vergerio then interprets Jerome's "Ciceronian" dream and points out the necessity of classical learning. Jerome had many rivals, who were scheming against him in Rome. Jerome hence departed to study with Gregory of Nazianzus, then lived in the desert, where he tamed the lion, and finally arrived in Bethlehem.

3. *Peroratio*

Vergerio reflects on Jerome's unceasing benevolence to his persistent enemies and concludes that if anyone should find themselves in a similar situation, they should console St. Jerome and maintain similar kindness towards their persecutors. The oration ends with an appeal to God's intercession.

¹¹¹ The panegyric comprised a call for humanism in the service of ecclesiastical community; humanist studies would prepare a learned clergy capable of reforming moral corruption by living exemplary lives. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 115–29.

¹¹² Ibid, 155.

¹¹³ The correct interpretation, based on Greek etymology. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, 24–25.

SERMON 9

The oration was delivered in front of the papal curia in Siena in 1408.¹¹⁴ The audience is addressed as *reverendissimi patres fratresque carissimi*. Vergerio confidently states that his orations in honor of St. Jerome are an annual practice of many years, referring to it as an obligation, *munus*. Vergerio's attachment to St. Jerome is expressed, but not emphasized.

1. *Exordium*

The justification of praise is based on Vergerio's duty to his tradition.¹¹⁵ Vergerio states his inadequacy since, according to him, no one in the whole world could sufficiently praise Jerome. Besides, praise is a way to learn to imitate the virtuous subjects of praise.

2. Body of the oration

Vergerio starts by praising Jerome's knowledge and a description of his "Ciceronian" dream. After its reinterpretation, he argues that knowledge of secular texts is necessary in order to advance the study of the sacred ones. Comparing one's spiritual battle with battles in arms, he then quotes from the letter to Eustochium and praises Jerome's endurance. Besides, he had persistent rivals whose lies tortured him in Rome. Jerome also battled against the heretics. He was immune to error and extremely humble, which made him refuse the pontificate in Rome and decide to learn from Gregory of Nazianzus despite his own fame and erudition.¹¹⁶ Jerome succeeded in his teaching by attesting it through his example, and "he publicly never advocated anything that would not be in harmony with his own lifestyle."¹¹⁷

3. *Peroratio*

Vergerio briefly observes Jerome's miracles and states that an account of Jerome's life should be convincing enough to prove Jerome's closeness to God. Besides, anyone could choose any one of Jerome's miracles to praise, yet none could treat them all—therefore, Vergerio apologizes for omitting them. He concludes with an offer of prayers to God and an appeal to Jerome's intercession.

¹¹⁴ As stated by Robey, this place and dating are indisputable, since at that point the papal curia was indeed in Siena and Vergerio was its member. Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values," 37.

¹¹⁵ Vergerio uses an almost technical expression: "liquidating his debt"; *solvendo quod debeo*.

¹¹⁶ Vergerio introduces the inexplicable parallel with Plato's constant need to learn, concluding that the intent to teach oneself is the very feature that makes a man competent to teach others as well. "Vere itaque doctor evasit qui tam diu discere voluit, dum esset qui docere se posset." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 248. Plato travelled from Athens for the sake of further learning. Cf. Sermon 1: "Fieret peregrinus atque discipulus, malens aliena verecunde discere quam sua aliis impudenter ingerere." *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 141, n. 3.

¹¹⁷ "Itaque sic postea docuit, ut quod verbo monstrabat confirmaret exemplo nec a vita discreparet oratio." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 248.

SERMON 10

This oration was delivered in a rural monastery.¹¹⁸ Vergerio initially addresses the audience as *religiosi ac sancti viri*, and later as *fratres*. Vergerio refers to his orations as *anniversarium munus in commemoratione meritorum gloriosi Hieronymi*, although he does not directly speak of Jerome as his personal saint. The oration is not fully preserved. The main topic is the imitation of St. Jerome's piety.

1. *Exordium*

The justification for praise is based on the monks' imitation of Jerome's life.¹¹⁹ Vergerio's expression of inadequacy is formed through a confession of his own sinfulness, due to which his praise is inappropriate in the presence of the purity of the monks.¹²⁰

2. Body of the oration

After admiring the secluded setting of the monastery, Vergerio recalls the austere lifestyle that St. Jerome led in the desert with his monks. Then he quotes a shorter passage from the letter to Eustochium.¹²¹ He reassures the monks that in case of old age or health problems, the rigor of such life may be alleviated.¹²² He continues the emphatic confession of extreme sinfulness and constant fervor to repent, despite being fully conscious of his sins. Through a paraphrase of Vergil's famous maxim *non omnia possumus omnes*, he reminds the audience that the favors of God are distributed according to the capacities of the individual and in inexplicable ways.¹²³ This should be accepted without futile struggle and with the firm trust in divine goodness. Vergerio then introduces the Parable of the Weeds, which is likely to have followed with the image of Jerome as a Doctor of the Church. The end of the oration is not preserved.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 15. McManamon states that it was delivered in front of the Benedictine monks, yet there is no direct reference to the rule. Cf. Sermons 1, 5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 250. This should also serve as the duty justification.

¹²⁰ "Sed vereor ne sensus mei saeculi voluptatibus infecti has verras delicias sentire non possint, ne ille, quem iubemur in sanctis suis laudare, ex ore peccatoris emissas in se laudes abhorreat." Ibid.

¹²¹ He explicitly refers to the text and states that he always cites it from the original source. This is the only oration where he is so specific, sounding as if trying to emphasize credibility.

¹²² Still he immediately adds that such was not the case of Jerome's monks who followed the regime even in case of sickness, mentioning specifically "drinking water on every occasion." Possibly he is referring to the contemporary practice of allowing wine at special occasions. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 254.

¹²³ Ibid, 255.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 254.

3. Analysis of the orations

“Strong feelings of sympathy on the part of the audience always prompt a speaker to do his best,” states Vergerio confidently, after announcing St. Jerome as the main topic of one of his speeches.¹²⁵ To secure the sympathy of the singular audience, Vergerio aptly devises the spotlights and the entire contents of his orations according to the specific context of their deliveries. Paraphrasing Ovid’s *Tristia*, Vergerio explains: “Consequently, in keeping with the ancient custom, we display the images of distinguished men, we describe their deeds, and we recall their services in order that men of succeeding generations zealously strive to emulate the virtue and follow the path of those who they esteem.”¹²⁶ What kind of an image of St. Jerome does Vergerio create when faced with a specific audience?¹²⁷

The imitation of examples is indeed the chief motto of his work. Yet, this study looks beyond Vergerio’s representations of St. Jerome. To illuminate Vergerio’s crafty adaptations, the analysis will shift the perspective and inspect how Vergerio builds rhetorical patterns, characteristic for the epideictic genre, in specific contexts. Addressing the monks, Vergerio focuses on Jerome’s asceticism; in contrast, speaking in front of the Istrian laity, he points out the proximity of Jerome’s birthplace. What is more: in the orations in a monastic environment, Vergerio justifies his praise also as his duty, yet he never avails himself of the same justification in Istria.

¹²⁵ “Excitat enim dicentis ingenium auditorum intentus affectus.” Ibid, 136–7.

¹²⁶ “Hinc veteri more proponuntur clarorum virorum imagines, describuntur gesta et benefacta memorantur ut aemulatione virtutis studiosa posteritas essequi quos probat nitatur.” Ibid, 143. Cf. “To praise a man is in one respect akin to urging a course of action. [...] Consequently, whenever you want to praise anyone, think of what you would urge the people to do.” Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1367b35–1368a10.

¹²⁷ Gary Remer explains the adaptations to the audience in terms of “keeping to a *decorum*.” Gary Remer, *Humanism and the Rhetoric Toleration* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 76–79.

As specified in the Methodology section, the following textual analysis will group the orations according to the specific audiences and interpret their shared features.¹²⁸ The audience or venue of the oration will thus serve as the main categorizing factor in the following part of the analysis in the present chapter. In addition to their resemblance to rhetorical patterns, I will discuss some of the curious characteristics of each “group.” Further on, the analysis will inspect possible concordance of Vergerio’s orations to McManamon’s outline for the funeral orations¹²⁹ and point out some of the outstanding elements of the orations in question, for example, the incorporation of Jerome’s letter to Eustochium. Finally, Vergerio’s orations will be paralleled with his three letters in honor of St. Jerome. Vergerio’s remarks about the audience as the aid to the orator’s conduct, repeated in his letters, are one of the indicators how he avails of similar patterns in both formats, thus faithfully following the classical guidance.¹³⁰

3. 1. The orations addressed to monks (Sermons 1, 5, 10)

In these orations, the justification of praise as duty is based on monks following the same rules of piety as Jerome. In Sermons 1 and 10, Vergerio is straightforward and also adds the monks’ (hoped for) imitation of Jerome’s monastic habits. The monks should not only listen to Vergerio’s oration but actively celebrate St. Jerome; because—in contrast to other Doctors of the Church, who “are a common legacy shared by all believers”—he pertains mainly to the monks, “since he himself was a monk.”¹³¹ Overreacting, Vergerio makes it sound as if Jerome

¹²⁸ Methodology, 2. 1.

¹²⁹ McManamon, “The Ideal Renaissance Pope” 26.

¹³⁰ Ep. 42. “[Q]uod scio nichil dicere me posse de Hieronymi laudibus quod non magnopere probes.” Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 93.

¹³¹ “Ceteri nam Christianae fidei doctores communes sunt omnibus, Hieronymus proprius et peculiariusque est monachorum. Nam ipse monachus fuit et monachorum pater.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 138.

was the only monk among the doctors, entirely omitting St. Gregory.¹³² He conveniently places him next to St. Benedict, stating that just as the monks cherish St. Benedict as the author of their rule, so they should celebrate St. Jerome as the source of their examples.¹³³ In Sermon 10, Vergerio is briefer, yet the justification is the same: “because you [the monks] are imitators of his life,” and at a later point, he closely describes Jerome’s strict monastic rules that they should also follow.¹³⁴ In Sermon 5, Vergerio is slightly unclear at the beginning, saying only that his audience has devoted themselves “to very noble concerns throughout their lives,” however, nor does he emphasize imitation throughout the oration.

Curiously, in the orations to the monks, the confession of inadequacy to praise is missing. Rather than that, Vergerio builds on the ancient maxim of a pleasant topic prompting a pleasant speech, denying any doubt that especially the monks, who, leading a life in imitation of St. Jerome’s piety, thirst to hear about their example—regardless his style. In Sermon 1, Vergerio seems especially confident:

[I] nevertheless cannot recall an occasion when I have approached it with greater enthusiasm than I do at this moment. For I am about to speak to your assembly and address listeners who are imitators of the life of that man [...] I am also moved by your eagerness and your longing; I have no doubt that you will choose to listen to a sermon about an individual whose blessed life you have chosen to imitate. Strong feelings of sympathy on the part of the audience always prompt a speaker to do his best, and [he cannot speak in other way but pleasantly, if he is aware of the audience’s inclination.]¹³⁵

¹³² Vergerio does, however, mention him in Sermon 5 while praising St. Jerome’s knowledge. Gregory was indeed more celebrated as a ruler and writer; however, his monasticism was also much recognized. Vergerio tends to be depreciative to other Church Doctors, for example in Sermon 5 he presents Jerome as by far surpassing Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory: “Sed quoad disciplinarum doctrinas atque huius vitae merita attinet, nemo est qui Hieronymum neget ceteris antefendum, qui modo vel tenuiter quae ipse scripsit quaeque de eo scripta sunt viderit.” Ibid, 181. For St. Gregory’s life see Carol Straw, Calambur Sivaramamurti, “St. Gregory the Great,” Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed April 4. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/St-Gregory-the-Great>.

¹³³ “Quibus quemadmodum Benedictus auctor fuit regulae, ita Hieronimus exemplorum.”; “As Benedict was the source of your rule, so Jerome was the source of your examples.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 138–39.

¹³⁴ “[C]uius vita imitators facti esetis [...]” Ibid, 250–51.

¹³⁵ “Excitat enim dicentis ingenium auditorum intentus affectus, nec possumus nisi iucunde dicere quod scimus libenter audiri.” Ibid, 137. I use my own translation, since McManamon’s only partly transfers the meaning. This phrase is also very common in Vergerio’s letters. Cf. e.g. Letter 87: Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 186.

Similar wording is used in Sermon 5: “And yet I have no fear that you will not listen attentively, most honest men, now that I have stated my intention to address the matters of faith.”¹³⁶ Later, he is even more detailed: “That is why I am not afraid of speaking in a disorderly fashion or without sufficient embellishment. I have every confidence that you will listen to what I say with great interest.”¹³⁷ At a further point of the oration, he worries about prolonging his oration, but then confidently describes the audience’s unaltered attention.¹³⁸

Moving to the body of these orations, as mentioned, the main topic of both Sermons 1 and 10 is encouraging monks to closely imitate Jerome’s asceticism. In both of the orations, Jerome’s main attributes are piety, humility, temperance, and each event from Jerome’s life is employed to emphasize the call to imitation. For example, in Sermon 1, Vergerio tells of Jerome’s descriptions of the lives of Egyptian monks, written during his desert pilgrimage. Thus, even Jerome thought that descriptions of examples inspire their imitation, and according to Vergerio, Jerome’s primary intention was to create a terse narrative of their heroic virtue, inviting imitation.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, with his writing about monks, Jerome was not only creating examples for others but also endeavored to imitate them himself. In this manner, he became an example, just like the monks he had described.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in Sermon 10, Vergerio first expresses admiration for the secluded setting of the monastery, adding immediately how its

¹³⁶ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 171.

¹³⁷ “Quare non vereor me incomposite aut inorate dicere posse quod cum summa aviditate audituros vos scio. Ibid, 175.

¹³⁸ “And I would have done as I had planned, but I see that you continue to listen attentively as I go on with the sermon. To this point not a single of you has turned his eyes or ears away from me. Thus my enjoyment of what I am about and my desire to continue speaking have grown the same rate, I never really entertained the possibility that you would listen with such rapt attention to something that you did not enjoy.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 171.

¹³⁹ “[A]liena scribebat que ceteri posset imitari.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 138.

¹⁴⁰ “Evenitque de ipso quod de alio ipsemet scribit.” Ibid.

remote location keeps it untouched and sheltered from the busy world, and thus reminds of Jerome's ascetic seclusion in the desert.¹⁴¹

The orations to monks are also most conspicuously reproachful.¹⁴² In Sermon 1, Vergerio points out the greater number and, primarily, higher morality of the early monks in the desert.¹⁴³ In Sermon 5, he first praises the audience's devotion and worries about contemporaries' neglect of religious duties in contrast to the earthly business otherwise. Pointing out how, in pagan times, the sacred rites were observed with the utmost care, he describes the pagan practice in great detail. Such an example should inspire more diligent religious performance also in the present since existence on earth is temporary and "shared only with wild beasts."¹⁴⁴ Considering such diction, the previous praise of the monks' devotion sounds bluntly ironic. Even more, at a further point of the oration, Vergerio verbosely tells of his kind considerations of delivering the speech at the evening hour, taking into account all the other sacred offices they follow throughout the day. After the previous remark about failing observations of religious duties, his detailed description of the daily recitations sounds almost satirical. Sermon 10 is similar, recalling the strict regimen Jerome followed with the desert monks. He also points out "the considerable fruit he harvested through his admirable practice."¹⁴⁵ Seeing that it follows the idealized description of the monastery's environment and the monks' seemingly intent desire to celebrate Jerome, such reminiscence inevitably

¹⁴¹ Still he immediately adds that such was not the case of Jerome's monks who followed the regime even in case of sickness, mentioning specifically "drinking water on every occasion." Ibid, 254.

¹⁴² For this function of epideictic rhetoric in Christian context see O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*.

¹⁴³ "Complures ferme tunc esset monachi quam nunc Christiani. Eram enim urbes plenae monachi quibus nunc monasteria ipsa sunt vacua, nec errant etiam tam multi quam multo magis boni." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 138.

¹⁴⁴ "[V]itam perbreuem et commune cum brutis." Ibid, 172.

¹⁴⁵ "[Q]uam bonae patientiae fructum tum messuerit." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 252.

functions as rebuking. The addition that ascetic practice proved fruitful sounds instead as a reproach.

Sermon 10, however, stands out among the orations due to its reproachful tone. Moreover, it also reflects a different image of Vergerio. While in other orations, the only reason for his fear of failing to praise Jerome sufficiently is his imperfect eloquence, here he refers to his imperfection and sinfulness. The entire *exordium* uses an almost confessional tone: Vergerio is afraid that he will not be able to taste the essence of holiness with the monks and that God will “shudder upon” hearing such praises in the presence of the purity of the monks.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, his description of Jerome’s desert life is cut off with a rhetorical question—seeing all that, what should a wretch, *miserus*, like him do? His curious exclamation is followed by an emphatic confession of extreme sinfulness and constant failure to repent, which is clearly ironic:

Until now, I have been engaged in worldly affairs, and yet I fear neither the guilt that has accumulated for my past sins nor the punishment that will be meted out at a future judgment. Rather, I multiply my sins through a misguided sense of my own impunity, and I become worse by the day because I fail to repent.¹⁴⁷

The description does not refer to Vergerio but is aimed at the audience. The accentuated exposé concludes that his sole consolation remains in hope—by praying and wishing for salvation. Reassurance to the monks, who, in contrast to him, “have already made a deposit toward eternal happiness,” underscores the sarcasm.¹⁴⁸ Such recurring irony makes the impression that also the missing statement of inadequacy and especially Vergerio’s confident declarations of the audience’s firm attention could be reasoned through it.

¹⁴⁶ “Sed vereor ne sensus mei saeculi voluptatibus infecti has verras delicias sentire non possint, ne ille, quem iubemur in sanctis suis laudare, ex ore peccatoris emissas in se laudes abhorreat.” Ibid, 250.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 252–53.

¹⁴⁸ “[Q]ui iam arram tenetus aeternae felicitates [...]” Ibid, 254–55.

3. 2. The orations delivered in Istria (3, 6)

The justification of praise in these orations is the closeness of Jerome's birthplace to their venues.¹⁴⁹ Both of the orations emphasize the audience's special bond to the saint and encourage the listeners to praise him as their patron. Vergerio tries to paint him as accurately as possible and presents him as a typical illustrious resident of their fatherland.¹⁵⁰ In Sermon 3, he animates the audience to take pride in Jerome: "While others have a tendency to boast in the most outrageous way if they have shared their birthplace with persons distinguished in letters or in virtue as the world reckons things, how much the more justly can we boast about this saint [...]"¹⁵¹ Similar wording is used in Sermon 6: despite first rejecting this local theory, Vergerio states that those who accept the tradition nevertheless "boast about such a great fellow citizen."¹⁵²

Otherwise, both of these sermons are short and quite simplistic. Vergerio leaves out the usual expression of the orator's inadequacy and rarely comments on his rhetoric. As if aiming for a most plausible parallel, in Sermon 3, Vergerio compares the usual praiseworthy achievements of illustrious citizens, contrasting them to Jerome's immensely worthier holy writings and sacred erudition. With a similar intention, he points out the meaning of celebrating

¹⁴⁹ "[L]oco terrestri illius regionis vicini." Ibid, 196. None of the orations the location is precisely pronounced by its name. It is not the venue that Vergerio refers to, but rather Stridon, i.e. Jerome's birth town, as a "place near by" (*hinc proximo loco*), which is located in "this particular region" (*regio ista*). On contrast, in Sermon 8, which took place in Rome, there is absolutely no relationship established to the realities of Jerome's life during the time he spent there. Jerome's Rome is not referred to as the same spot than the venue of the oration.

¹⁵⁰ The need to bring the saints nearer was evident already in the later Middle Ages. It was not only the modern and contemporary saints that were gaining popularity, but also those, who were known or presented as compatriots. André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133.

¹⁵¹ "Num ceteri gloriari permaxime soleant si uos claros secundum saeculum homines aut litteris aut virtute originis suae consortes habuere, quanto nos iustius ex hoc sancto gloriari possumus [...]" McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 150–51.

¹⁵² "Utumque habet se veritas, nos famam hanc veterem cupide amplexati tanto coindigena gloriamur [...]" Vergerio delivers a semi-historical account and rejects that the local identification of the small village Stregna with Jerome's Stridon based on similarities of pronunciation as historically unfounded. Yet he again refers to it in a positive tone on later point of the oration, denoting it as "a local rumour" (*dictum est*). Ibid, 198.

the saints' name-days in Sermon 6. In the case of saints, the celebration is different than among people, he explains, since the celebration of the saints' earthly death is, in fact, a celebration of their heavenly birth. People, in contrast, usually celebrate each other's "deaths," which are but births to earthly life only from their point of view. In Sermon 3, he also includes the disreputable story of a woman's dress planted into Jerome's bedroom, although he does not mention it in any other oration.¹⁵³ In Sermon 6, he minutely argues how, despite his departure, Jerome loved his homeland, and he only departed for Rome to become "better and more learned" and not because of Rome's greatness.¹⁵⁴

Both of the sermons are, therefore, based on treating Jerome as a local saint, calling to the audience to embrace him as a patron. He emphasizes the saint's shared humanity with them and paints him in terms of human relationships. His phrases evoke the language of the late antique practice regarding the local cults.¹⁵⁵ In Sermon 6, he introduces an image of the audience's relationship to Jerome almost in terms of a family: praising him faithfully, they, now living close to Jerome's earthly residence, will make themselves "members of his heavenly lineage" in the afterlife.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Jerome's role as a divine intercessor is emphasized. Vergerio relies on his intercessor with God in exchange for the community's devotion and illustrates their ties in terms of the client-patron relationship. In Sermon 3, he uses an almost commercial vocabulary: "You will undoubtedly feel that I do you a service by commending you to his care and by having you invest your money wisely in him, if you earn

¹⁵³ According to McManamon, he "seemed to have lost faith in it." Ibid, 16.

¹⁵⁴ "Patriaque Romam pertulit, non quia maior esset aut clarior, sed quia illa ad perficiendum eum magis erat idonea; quippe qui non illud potissimum quaerebat unde natus esset aut vitam ubi duceret sed quo post mortem esset arbiturus." Only later does he add that in any case, Jerome was not overly concerned with his origins or temporary whereabouts, but much more with his destination in the afterlife. Ibid, 198.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 46.

¹⁵⁶ [P]raecipue tamen nos, huius regionis incolae, speciali quadam cura ac propensiore diligentia natale Sancti Hieronymi celebrare debemus, ut qui loco terrestres illius regionis vicini sumus eius meritis et precibus caelestis suae originis consortes efficiamur." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 196.

a profit in this life, and especially if you gain an everlasting reward.”¹⁵⁷ However, in neither of the orations does he describe any miracles as it would have been otherwise expected in regard to cult’s creation.

3. 3. The orations in front of the papal court (8, 9)

These two orations bear a great resemblance to each other and to parts of Vergerio’s letters. The justification of praise very obviously is based on Vergerio’s deeply rooted personal devotion. As if in search of another argument, Vergerio humbly adds that praise inspires imitation. Jerome or any other saint has no need for Vergerio’s or anyone’s commitment unless it should spur the person’s progress. Devotion to saints is therefore profitable only to the devotees themselves. Both orations are particularly courteous and employ numerous expressions of humbleness. Right at the beginning of Sermon 8, Vergerio immediately reminds his audience that by praising Jerome, he is not looking for praise himself and adds that rather than to his speech, he would have devoted his entire mind solely to Jerome.¹⁵⁸ In Sermon 9, he is even more dramatic: after the confession of his inadequacy, he fiercely breaks out in an exclamation: “Yet, why should I speak about myself?”¹⁵⁹

Moreover, the expression of inadequacy is similar in both orations: Vergerio feels that in his years of experience, his powers to deliver the speech continuously weaken, while his desire only continues.¹⁶⁰ In Sermon 9, he compares his practice with mathematics (*quantitas*),

¹⁵⁷ “Sentient profecto sese ei utiliter commendatos opesque suas bene in illo locatas cum ad huius vitae commode, tum aeterna praemia, quae ipsius meritis et intercession necnon et aliorum sanctorum ille nobis concedit.” Ibid, 158.

¹⁵⁸ “Sit eum quemadmodum sermo, ita et mens prepetua intentione dedicate.” Ibid, 222–23. Cf. Ep. 78.

¹⁵⁹ “Nam quid ego de me dicam?” Ibid, 234–35.

¹⁶⁰ “Ita deinceps per annos affectus sum ut augeri michi desiderium sentiam, minui facultatem.” Ibid, 223.

employing almost technical expressions. He confesses his “increasing debt” to pay adequate honor to St. Jerome. Opposed to the commonly known fact that the debt decreases with payments, Vergerio each year feels that he has fewer resources to pay the debt to his vow. Vergerio’s rhetorical capacities are thus presented as if they were a practical ability, while his intense desire is lifted to the level of spirituality. Such a careful separation continues in both orations.

Furthermore, in both, Vergerio announces Jerome’s utter unattainability as proved by the insufficiency of any praise to him. In Sermon 8, he illustrates it through a comparison between praising humans and praising the saints and emphasizes the excellence and the degree of Jerome’s praiseworthy deeds. He concludes by stating that there is absolutely no human tongue that could praise him adequately. In Sermon 9, he vividly exclaims: “I do not think that the entire human race, everyone who is alive today or has lived in the past, is sufficiently endowed to praise the saint.”

The body topic of both these orations stresses the importance of knowledge.¹⁶¹ Jerome’s classical learning that contributed to his sacred writing is illustrated by numerous lists of his works, and both orations describe his “Ciceronian” dream in more detail. The message is made verbatim in Sermon 8: “If you were not a Ciceronian, you could barely read sacred letters, and you certainly would not read them with the same enjoyment.” In concordance, Sermon 9 barely mentions any of Jerome’s deeds other than his scholarly expertise and the customary letter to Eustochium. Even Jerome’s humility is exemplified by reference to his humble disposition to his talent: according to Vergerio, Jerome echoed Plato and continued to strive to learn regardless of his universal fame of intellect. Both orations are rather long, yet remarkably

¹⁶¹ For the background of Sermons’ 8 and 9 origins see Ibid, 21–24.

accomplished. Neither describes miracles; however, Sermon 8 declares that Jerome's learning was "a veritable miracle."¹⁶²

Compared to the other orations, however, Sermon 8 stands out also for its personal tone. It contests only with Sermon 5, which is, apart from Vergerio's letters, the only other oration where Vergerio refers to his family's devotion to Jerome. In both orations, Vergerio affirms having personal experience of St. Jerome's loyalty in exchange for devoted praise.¹⁶³ Moreover, in Sermon 8, he explains how he had learned it through the example of his father, whose recent passing made Vergerio heir to the family devotion to the saint.¹⁶⁴ In none of his orations does he explicitly announce the reason for his family's or his father's devotion, nor does he recall the personal experience of Jerome's loyalty specifically. The explanation is, however, found in Vergerio's Ep. 79 to his father and was probably omitted in the orations. This was also due to its political context, but chiefly out of its literalisation.¹⁶⁵ Vergerio's emotional appeal, tied to the family tradition and especially to the recently departed, is a perfect method to introduce the saint as a patron.¹⁶⁶ Similarly to the orations from Istria, he refers to the devotion as a client-patron relationship. This time not in the context of the community, but only of his family. In sermon 8, Vergerio speaks of his father's prayers, even on behalf of Vergerio: "I have frequently experienced how influential his prayers to you on my behalf have proven to be [...]. The advocacy that he practiced on my behalf, now falls entirely to me."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Ibid, 226–27. Erasmus included this panegyric in one of his volumes of *spuria* about Jerome. Hilmar M. Pabel, "Portraying Jerome," in *Herculean labours Erasmus and the Editing of St. Jerome's Letters in the Renaissance*, ed. Hilmar M. Pabel (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2008), 197.

¹⁶³ Cf. Sermon 5. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 232–33.

¹⁶⁴ "[I]ta et ei quoque defuncto sim heres." Ibid, 223–24.

¹⁶⁵ The letter will be treated more exhaustively in the following sub-chapter. In it Vergerio recalls the family's flight from Koper during the Genoan attacks in 1380, and asserts that it was St. Jerome's divine intercession that "carried us safe and sound from the devastation and smoldering ashes of our pillaged homeland." "[...] ex patrie populate ruinis, ardentis cineribus sanos et tutos evexit[.]" Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 186.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Sermon 5. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 224.

¹⁶⁷ [C]uius apud te preces mea causa plurimum valuisse sum crebro expertum [...] et quod mihi patroccinium in illo erat, nunc omne sit in me ipso[.] Ibid, 222–25.

In Sermon 5, he describes devotion in even more detail, reporting that his family arranged annual feasts in St. Jerome's honor as long as they could afford them:

[T]hey were accustomed for as long as their resources permitted to offer a solemn banquet for the indigent of the city. Moreover, they had clear memories that their own ancestors had consistently performed the same service on this feast day. [...] If ever fortune will look upon me and smile once again, I will not hesitate to revive that ancient custom of our family.¹⁶⁸

However, Vergerio's reference to his family's special devotion was probably another rhetorical trope rather than demonstrable fact.¹⁶⁹ The patron saints of Iustinopolis were, in fact, St. Nazarius and St. Alexandrus,¹⁷⁰ who, in contrast to Jerome, are not mentioned in any of Vergerio's extant works, nor in his letters.¹⁷¹ As indicated by Frazier, such an appropriation of "personal saints" was standard practice with humanists.¹⁷² First, the humanists were continually passing through Italian cities, courts, and university towns, thus encountering different local cultures. They depended on their rhetorical abilities, which they tailored according to the

¹⁶⁸ "[S]olebant parentes mei, dum fortuna laetaeque res starent, atque id a suis fieri solitum commemorabant perpetuo hoc ipso festo die, cum sacra ritu debito et solito more peracta essent, sollemne convivium pauperibus facere. Si quando tamen fortuna placide vultu faverit, ne vetustum quidem morem familiae nostrae praetermittam." Ibid, 176–77.

¹⁶⁹ I have been unable to acquire any information on special veneration of the local cult of St. Jerome in Koper. The Glagolitic tradition of representing St. Jerome as a local patron saint was more present in southern Istria and especially Dalmatia. On Slavic cult of St. Jerome see Julia Verkholtantsev, *The Slavic Letters of St. Jerome: The History of the Legend and Its Legacy, or, How the Translator of the Vulgate Became an Apostle of the Slavs* (DeKalb, IL: NIU Press, 2014), Badurina-Stipčević, "Legenda o Jeronimu u starijoj hrvatskoj književnoj tradiciji" [Jerome's legend in old Croatian literary tradition], 24, Ines Ivić, "Jerome Comes Home: The Cult of Saint Jerome in Late Medieval Dalmatia," *Hungarian Historical Review* 5, no. 3 (2016), 618–44.

¹⁷⁰ The cult of these two saints was in fact present in Iustinopolis. The transportation of St. Nazarius's relics was, for example, the main religious calamity during the Genovese attack on Koper which also forced the Vergerio family to leave their hometown. St. Alexander's relics are preserved in the cathedral church of Koper. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 506. Referring to Daniele Ireneo, "Nazario, vescovo e patrono di Capodistria, Santo," *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 9 (1969): 777–79.

¹⁷¹ Smith reports of four hymns in honor of St. Nazarius that were wrongly attributed to Vergerio, since they were added to one of the manuscripts with his *Sermones*. They were written in 1422 to celebrate the return of the relics to Koper, arranged by archbishop of Genua, Pileo de Marini. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 506. Cf. McManamon's Research Aids, where the hymns are listed as anonymous. McManamon, "Research Aids: Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder." <https://research.luc.edu/media/lucedu/history/pdfs/Vergerio%20Research%20Aids%20Database.pdf>. For hymns see: Peter Kandler, "Alcuni versi del 1421 in onore del Beato Nazario Protoepiscopo di Giustinopoli," *L' Istria*, I. Papsch, 1845.

¹⁷² Alison Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 16.

circumstances. This entitled them to either exchangeable loyalties or to patron saints, which were otherwise universal. Moreover, writing about saints could also aim at the promotion of a specific locality.¹⁷³

Vergerio's case seems to be a combination of both abovementioned notions. An "ancient tradition" of praising a famous and universal patron such as Jerome could serve to promote Vergerio's family and home-town and thus contribute to his and Iustinopolis' reputation. Although pretending disdain in his letters, Vergerio was quite concerned about the local history of his hometown. He wrote two works treating primarily the region of his hometown, *De situ Iustinopolis* and *De republica Venetorum*. He was also engaged in discussions about the origins of the name Iustinopolis, claiming that the city was named by the Emperor Justin II (565–578). Justin reinforced and regulated the original Roman settlement of Aegida or Capris, inhabited by fugitives of the Langobard invasion at the time of his arrival. Moreover, Vergerio describes the practice in one of his letters, where he states, that the only reason his hometown could be praised for its closeness of Jerome's birthplace:

Because you see, even the obscure places had brought up great men, and celebrated cities ignoble ones, since, as it is indeed attested, it usually happens more often that extreme brilliance springs from an oppressed and unknown place. In this regard, you could give many ancient examples, yet you could hardly apply any worthier example nor one that would be dearer to me, than, as you have remarked, St. Jerome, my patron, "the star of the Church," to embellish him in your words, and, as you ought to have added, of exceptional learning. He was born not far from my fatherland's borders by a humble place, which became therefore revered before many other most splendid cities.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ For example, Paduan orator Sico Polenton wrote lives of Paduan saints in order to promote local virtue, Agostino Dati wrote orations in honor of Siena's patron saints Catherine and Bernardino of Siena. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 133, n. 17.

¹⁷⁴ "Sed, ut vix ullum dignius, ita nullum michi gratius adhibere potuisses quam quod Hieronymum memoras, patronum meum, Ecclesie, ut voce tua suo eum titulo decorem, sidus, et, ut adicere debueras, summum doctrine, quem non procul a patrie mee finibus humilis locus sed hoc uno plurimis amplissimis urbibus." Ep. 62, to Giovanni Zabarella. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 145.

In this passage, Vergerio refers to one of the common *topoi* of the epideictic genre, which links the subject of praise with his birthplace and vice versa.¹⁷⁵ The reference clearly illustrates Vergerio's intentions and firm awareness of the possibilities of the epideictic genre. Linking his hometown to a famous universal saint such as Jerome added to its promotion. Besides, appealing to local or family tradition also served as grounds for the typical justification of praise, while offering experience, especially personal, was a standard trope already in medieval hagiography. Moreover, as Vauchez writes about similar creation of saintly patronage in the late Middle Ages: those saints one had "heard spoken of by those close to them, were the subject of *specialis affectio*, since they were infinitely closer than the great names officially praised."¹⁷⁶ A peculiar, yet telling observation is also one in which he refers to his devotion as an "ancient tradition" of his family (*vetus mos*) in Sermons 5 and 8—the latter delivered in front of the papal curia. In contrast, in the orations delivered in Istria, Vergerio only animates the audience to take Jerome as their patron in terms of a local saint. He does not refer to his family at all.¹⁷⁷ His justifications of special devotion are thus different and seem to present only an adaptable rhetorical trope.

Moreover, to reinforce his initiation, in Sermon 8, Vergerio creates a correlation: in order to maintain and increase his devotion to St. Jerome in his father's memory, he should keep the annual practice of panegyrics.¹⁷⁸ The passage cannot be passed without a comparison to another of Vergerio's letters to his father, namely Ep. 78.¹⁷⁹ Just as in the *exordium* of Sermon 8, Vergerio states his inadequacy based on Jerome's utter incomprehensibility but

¹⁷⁵ George Alexander Kennedy, *Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 156. For representations of a saint as a *homo novus*, Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 187.

¹⁷⁶ Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 133.

¹⁷⁷ The only tradition, Vergerio mentions in Sermon 6 in Istria, is the "local rumor," that Jerome was born in Stregna. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 198–99.

¹⁷⁸ "Quod igitur ad me attinet, quemadmodum devotioni animi conservanda augmentandaque est, ita munus hoc annuum reddendarum laudum nullatenus est negligendum." Ibid, 224–5.

¹⁷⁹ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 185.

immediately adds that regardless of his inferiority, he will faithfully preserve his annual practice in order to repay your [his father's] love.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, in Sermon 8, he argues that his orations are a sort of debt to his family, using an almost desperate tone: “In all honesty, my debt at this moment is already registered in a promissory note, and the date on which I have to repay it has arrived.”¹⁸¹ An emotional insert is undoubtedly used to captivate the audience and again shows Vergerio's smart adherence to the classical precepts of *movere et delectare*.¹⁸² The fact that the oration was meant as a defense of humanist education adds to his ingenuity.

3. 4. The orations with unknown settings (2, 4, 7)

Inspecting these orations, some resemblance can be spotted. All of their *exordia* include a reference to pagan practice, focusing on praise. In Sermon 2, Vergerio states that remembering the virtues of others and admiring them, one tends to be inspired to imitate them. His reasoning is underlined by a paraphrase of Ovid and Sallust. This confirms that the same practice was defined and performed in the antiquity.¹⁸³ Besides, if even the pagans practiced celebrating birthdays of their loved ones, how much more should Christians celebrate the feast-days of their Doctors? Sermon 7 includes a yet more specific reference to the pagans, immediately turning to oratory; it is common to celebrate the pagans and “praise and exalt them in lengthy panegyrics; hence it would appear ungrateful to neglect the saints.”¹⁸⁴ Again, he adds: the pagans are praised for the examples they left for posterity to imitate. The justification of praise is based on the ancient tradition of praising distinguished men in all of these orations.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 177.

¹⁸² Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, 20.

¹⁸³ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 142.

¹⁸⁴ “Laudamus namque illos et ingentibus praeconiis attolimus [...]” Ibid, 208.

Similarly, in all of them, Vergerio asserts his inadequacy to praise Jerome's numerous merits due to his insufficient rhetorical capabilities. He enumerates the common qualities to praise in men and concludes that the virtues of saints are far more significant; therefore, it is a more laborious task to praise them.¹⁸⁵ All three orations include numerous comments on Vergerio's rhetoric.

In all of the orations, Vergerio then inserts lengthy comparisons of the earthly and the spiritual, which develop into contemplation of civil affairs. He announces their resemblance, yet simultaneously their utter inferiority, to spiritual. Sermon 2 immediately proceeds to triumphs, while Sermon 4 initially compares the enemies, then battles, and finally proceeds to victories. Vergerio begins with a compound climaxing parallel by listing the enemies that may prevent one from pleasing God: the world, the flesh, and the devil.¹⁸⁶ Then he weighs the earthly warfare and the battles of the soul; while an earthly battle is sometimes resolved in a truce, levitated with intervals of peace and fought against visible enemies, the battle of the soul, on the contrary, is eternal, the attack waged from every direction, and the enemies deceitfully imperceptible. The warfare metaphor in sacred writings is indeed typical, yet it conveys Vergerio's meticulous manner of illustration and striving for vividness.¹⁸⁷ As if to break the sermonizing tone, he concludes with a reference to Homer: "All in all, if one overcomes the flesh and turns a deaf ear to the sweet song of the Sirens, what else has he done but conquer himself and put reason ahead of emotions?"¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ These are either virtue or instruction in moral conduct (*bene vivendi doctrina*). In the first case, an orator should enumerate courageous deeds (*fortiter operando*) and in the second, the written works (*scribendo*).

¹⁸⁶ The world is distracting because it gives the impression that wealth, public reputation and power should be the objects of one's yearning, the flesh weakens the soul, and the devil just schemes daily enticements.

¹⁸⁷ Katherine Allen Smith, "Spiritual Warriors in Citadels of Faith: Martial Rhetoric and Monastic Masculinity in the Long Twelfth Century," in *Negotiating Clerical Identities: Priests, Monks and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jenifer Thibodeaux Springer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 92.

¹⁸⁸ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 164–65.

Sermon 7 is particularly remarkable since Vergerio compares the organization of a republic with faith. In both, there are certain classes of individuals who take care of the appropriate sorts of affairs and are worthy of praise.¹⁸⁹ In the republic, to maintain practical affairs, there are two classes; the illustrious individuals, who maintain internal and external peace, and the strong and courageous men, who use their arms to protect the cities without fearing death. In faith, the first class is presented by the apostles and the second one by the martyrs. However, in each case, there are also two groups of learned men who are concerned with spiritual affairs. In the republic, one group urges the people and the soldiers to the common good and admonishes them. The other group collects and writes down the events in order to hand them over to posterity. In faith, on the other hand, the confessors are paralleled with the first group and the Doctors with the second. This leads to a list of praiseworthy deeds for both groups. To illustrate the measure of sanctity, Vergerio then refers to the three statuses of society that correspond to three kinds of saints, apparently separated by the number of their sins.¹⁹⁰ He places the martyrs above all. They inspire all the classes by their merits and should, therefore, be rightfully celebrated. Vergerio then argues that Jerome is praiseworthy for all the numerous qualities described in the lists, and emphasizes his role first as an apostle, but most of all a martyr. In addition to this studied comparison, the oration also contains two etymological explanations: the meaning of the word apostle as “the one sent” and two interpretations of Jerome’s name.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ “Habet enim fides nostra viros quales esse in unamquamque republicam bene dispositam convenit.” Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ “The purest is nobility, who are like virgins; the middle class is paralleled with widows, and the plebeians with wedded men.”; “Quorum omnium sunt aliqui praestanti nobilitate praediti ut fide nostra virgins, alii mediocri ut viduantes, alii plebeia ut in coniugali satu degentes.” Ibid, 206.

¹⁹¹ Jerome could therefore be considered an Apostle for his preaching, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Ibid, 207. Interpreting Jerome’s name Vergerio follows Jacopo da Voragine, who explained Jerome’s name as “holy law”, “holy grove” or “judge of words.” Giovanni d’Andrea uses the same. *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 216 and 29. For the common interpretations of Hieronymus see Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, 24–25.

These two etymology references and the erudite comparison with the organization of the republic does not necessarily indicate a particularly educated audience, considering that Vergerio would aim for the allusions that they would consider common knowledge.¹⁹² The fact that he does not include the correct interpretation of Jerome's name, based on Greek etymology, also underpins this hypothesis.¹⁹³ The extended comparison is an example of Vergerio's skill to illustrate the imperceptible in earthly terms vividly. Its particularities energize and "lighten up" the meaning and tie it with an image of a well-known and influential concept in both cases.¹⁹⁴ The orations, however, differ in their *peroratio*s; while Sermons 2 and 4 only briefly mention the episode of Jerome's taming the lion, Sermon 7 concludes with a description of one Jerome's miracles—helping pilgrims. Again, it is curious that Vergerio describes Jerome's safeguarding of the pilgrims in a different way than his sources, adapting it to his purposes.¹⁹⁵ Although Vergerio does not state it openly, his message is clear: Jerome was "quite ready to assist pagans and criminals" and was equally kind to everyone who chose to praise his name, which should convince the audience to do the same.¹⁹⁶ However, while the other two orations focus more on the imitation of Jerome's unspecified merits, Sermon 7 brings a distinct call for religious tolerance. Because this is one of the three miracles Vergerio chose to describe, its inclusion might serve another purpose, similar to the references about Plato's travels.¹⁹⁷ Travelling, including pilgrimage, was considered a "spontaneous exile" by humanists,¹⁹⁸ and

¹⁹² See Witt's brief discussion of the passage Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 383.

¹⁹³ He does refer to it in Sermon 8.

¹⁹⁴ For a through treatment of illustration in sacred rhetoric see e.g. Debora K. Shrufer, *Sacred Rhetoric: the Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Princeton University Press, 2004), 142–45. And Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 145–47.

¹⁹⁵ For the summary of the whole narrative see the previous section "Recurring motives."

¹⁹⁶ *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 216.

¹⁹⁷ Sermons I, 9.

¹⁹⁸ Jerome's penitent time in Chalcis was interpreted in a similar way. The solitude of the desert was considered a *topos* since Jerome's times. Jerome's desert period acquired another dimension with the humanists,

such encouragement could be therefore expected, especially from Vergerio, whose call for “active humanism” was pointed out also in his other works.¹⁹⁹

3. 5. General observations

Compared to the provisional scheme of the funeral orations, the general structure of Vergerio’s orations is less conspicuous. Although it is possible to perceive the three main parts—for example, Jerome’s biographical information is rarely included in the *exordium*—they evolve from one another almost indistinctly. The *exordium* is usually the longest part of the orations. Beside the possible direct address to the audience, Vergerio sometimes comments on their whereabouts (see Sermon 10). The most conspicuous part of every *exordium* is the justification of praise as a duty. The inadequacy expression is usually based on Vergerio’s rhetorical incapability compared to the abundance of Jerome’s merits.

The part following the *exordium* continues the *exordium*’s theme and is not visibly separated. In some of the orations, there are also some announcements of praise, which could be taken as indicators. For example in Sermon 2: “Today, however, we have before us an exemplar, who stands out from the crowd [...]” In Sermon 5: “I am about to deliver a sermon on praises of the most glorious Jerome.” And in Sermon 7 after a compliment to all the Doctors: “But among all those saints we ought to praise the glorious Jerome.” But these are rare. For the sake of schematic representation, I separated them at the point where Vergerio starts giving examples from Jerome’s life. The events from Jerome’s life are not enumerated either chronologically or in a coherent narrative but intertwined with frequent digressions to other

since due to his simultaneous scholarly activities it could also be interpreted as solitary learning, praised already by Petrarch. Belting, “St. Jerome in Venice: Giovanni Bellini and the Dream of Solitary Life,” 11.

¹⁹⁹ In contrast to Petrarch’s emphasis on Jerome’s desert period, based on Petrarch’s preference for the *vita contemplativa* lifestyle. Robey, “P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values,” 7.

topics.²⁰⁰ The most common digressions concern rhetoric and are by their function only confessions of inadequacy. Examples from Jerome's life are often handled as supporting arguments for Vergerio's advice or reproach to the audience. Only in some cases, they form a vague biography, usually towards the *peroratio* in the orations that previously focused mostly on other topics (e.g. Sermon 9). Because of that, in contrast to McManamon's terminology, this part of the orations is instead of "bibliography" referred to as "body" in the following schematic representation.

The *peroratio* is short in most of the orations. Vergerio reflects on the abundance of Jerome's miracles, introduces a *paralepsis*, and quickly concludes with an appeal to God. The *peroratio* is longer only in Sermons 5, 7, where he still describes at least one miracle; Jerome's ascension to heaven and in 5 and his help to the pilgrims in 7. As mentioned, these are the only miracles described at any length, and they had both occurred postmortem. Although in Sermons 2 and 4, he very briefly refers to Jerome's taming of the lion, he does not recall the episode in any detail. The amplitude of Jerome's miracles is often compared to the breadth of the ocean or river flow.²⁰¹ To avoid speaking of miracles, Vergerio frequently states his limitations in time. For example, in Sermon 2, he refers to his "effort not to lengthen this sermon" or their unattainable number. In Sermon 3, they are thus "too numerous" and too "impressive," similarly in Sermon 6, "it would not be possible to explain them in any detail, nor it would have been possible even to mention them in passing."²⁰² Most convenient is the explanation from Sermon 4, where Vergerio concludes that "[i]n the final analysis it is truly an enormous

²⁰⁰ Deficiencies in the chronology were standard at the time. See previous part 2. III. and Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, 25–26.

²⁰¹ E.g. Sermon 2: "At this point I see stretching before me a boundless expanse of ocean, whether I look toward his life and his morals or train my mind's eye upon his miracles. But in an effort not to lengthen this sermon, I now bring it to a close [...]" McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 140–49. Cf. Sermon 5.

²⁰² "[Q]uae nedum explicare sed nee vel attingere facile quisquam posset." Ibid, 204–05.

miracle that he worked so many miracles of such great substance.”²⁰³ In Sermon 9, he is precise, saying that “since anyone who speaks on Jerome can choose from among many significant miracles and cannot possibly treat them all or easily rehearse even a few of them,” he will “omit their treatment.”²⁰⁴ In Sermons 1 and 8, Vergerio does not refer to Jerome’s miracles at all.

The quotation of the letter to Eustochium also varies in the orations. As customary in the *officium* for Jerome, it starts with the seventh paragraph of the letter.²⁰⁵ The quotes are of different lengths and do not depend on the contexts of orations’ delivery. In most of the orations, Vergerio quotes rather lengthily, up to the verse from the Song of Solomon (4, 5, 6, 9), and in Sermon 7 he is a bit shorter.²⁰⁶ He quotes only from the first sentence in Sermon 3 (beginning of the sentence), in Sermon 8 (Jerome’s description of the desert monks’ humble dwellings) and Sermon 10 (from the beginning to the description of the monk’s dwellings). The longer quotations of the letter serve to illustrate Vergerio’s sufferings in the desert. Vergerio craftily introduces the passage with different explanations for quoting Jerome’s words precisely; for example in Sermons 5, 7, it is plainly to show this suffering the most explicit way, in Sermon 4, it is to illustrate the elegance of Jerome’s wording, and in Sermon 6 it is to describe the monks dwellings most accurately. Vergerio is also careful to add that Jerome only wrote about his suffering to “supply an example of holiness for future generations and not to boast about himself.”²⁰⁷ He does not quote the letter in Sermons 1 and 2.

²⁰³ “Cuius rei argumentum est quod et in vita et post mortem ita miraculis claruit, ut miraculum permagnum sit eum tot et tanta operatum esse miracula.” Ibid, 168–69.

²⁰⁴ “Quae quoniam multa magnaue se dicenti offerunt nec possibile est omnia attingere aut facile vel pauca narrare, narratione omissa.” Ibid, 248–49.

²⁰⁵ Ep. 22. Saint Jerome, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, 52–159. Paragraph 7 starts on page 67.

²⁰⁶ The exact verse from the Song of Solomon is 1.3.2: “Because your anointing oils are fragrant we run after you.”

²⁰⁷ Sermon 7. “[N]on ad iactantiam sed ad sanctum exemplum praeibendum posteris de se scribit.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 210–11.

Although it might seem curious that Vergerio does not include a longer part from the letter either in Sermon 1 or in 10, which were both addressed to the monks, this impression is false. In Sermon 10, for example, he closely paraphrases the letter to Eustochium, while describing the penitential and austere practice that the monks should adhere to.²⁰⁸ Moreover, the entire oration's penitential tone closely echoes Jerome's voicing in the confessional parts of the letter. In another spot, namely in Sermon 5, Vergerio describes Jerome's appearance during his desert struggle. At first, he quotes Jerome's exact self-stylized words, yet later amplifies them by adding his own, slightly reproaching message to the audience: "Jerome did not have fashionable attire, no luxurious toga like those typically worn by prelates in our day, nor was his stomach swollen and dropping from obesity."²⁰⁹ In a similar paraphrasing manner, Vergerio also employs a later passage of the letter about Jerome's dream. Paraphrasing it carefully, he smartly inserts it at convenient spots, augmenting it by his comments. One of the best adaptations is in Sermon 8, where Vergerio introduces it after a lengthy confession of his rhetorical inadequacy to praise Jerome's eloquence. After he arrives to the conclusion that to describe such a subject justly, he would need also Jerome's own eloquence, Vergerio adds: "Nor would the fact that Jerome was once censured for his zeal deter me from treating the subject."²¹⁰ Then he summarizes Jerome's "Ciceronian" dream and interprets it to an explicit end: "if you were not a Ciceronian, you could barely read the sacred letters [...]" at all.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Thus ascribing to the same practice as e.g. Lupe de Olmedo (1370–1433), the author of the *Regula* for the congregation of Hermits of St. Jerome of the Observance in fourteenth-century Spain. Eugene Rice, "St Jerome's 'Vision of the Trinity': An Iconographical Note," *The Burlington Magazine* 125 (1983): 152.

²⁰⁹ "Cui non ornatior cultus, non splendida toga, ut eorum qui praelati nobis sunt, cui non pinguedine parcida venter tumus." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 188–89. The passage is also obviously reproaching, analogously as the other orations in monastic environments.

²¹⁰ "Nec me deterreret quod damnatus fuerit eius studii aliquando Hieronymus [...]" Ibid, 232–33.

²¹¹ Ibid, 332–233.

3. 6. Vergerio's letters

In the exhaustive collection of Vergerio's letters, one finds three letters that include praise of St. Jerome. Two are addressed to his father and one to his childhood friend Sancto Pelegrino. The letter to Sancto, Ep. 42, bears no mark to indicate the date or place of its origin. Smith dates it between the years 1392 and 1394.²¹² One of the letters to Vergerio's father, Ep. 78, is dated September 30, 1396, in Padua, and the other one, Ep. 79, is undated.²¹³ Based on its style and content, Smith groups it with the Paduan letters from the year 1397. Vergerio might have written them in order to observe his practice of praising Jerome also at times when he could not deliver a public oration. Yet only the letter to Sancto contains such an explanation: "It is only this year that I have failed to do so; certainly not out of negligence—which I wish had as little as possible effect on me—but because the journey to Tuscany that I went on this past summer took longer than I intended."²¹⁴ Unfortunately, only one of the letters is preserved entirely, Ep. 78. Nevertheless, the preserved beginnings and parts of their bodies show relevant elements.

All the letters smoothly adhere to the schematic outline created for the orations. Their openings or—in keeping in line with the research terminology—*exordia* contain the standard justification of praise and complaint about inadequacy. In all of the letters, the justification of praise is based on Vergerio's personal devotion. In the letter to Sancto, Vergerio bluntly states his reason: "Because you see, four years ago I made a sort of vow to deliver a speech in his

²¹² The numbering observes Smith's edition. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 91–93, 184–87. The *terminus post quem* is Pellegrini's death in May 1396. In the summer of 1395 Vergerio was in Padua and not in Tuscany as he states in the letter. In addition, his first speech could not have taken place before 1388, thus making the year 1392 the earliest year Vergerio could have taken his vow.

²¹³ Vergerio's name also appears in the *Monumenti* of the University in Padua at the time. Ibid, 184.

²¹⁴ "[S]olus hic a me annus pretermisus est, non quidem negligentia, quam velim minimum apud me posse, sed quia iter quod in Thusciam estate proxima suscepi minus celeriter quam ratus eram absolvi." Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 91.

praise every year on his feast day and I have done so diligently for three years now.”²¹⁵ Moreover, as already pointed out regarding the orations, he refers to his practice as a “debt” (*debitus*). In the letters to his father, Vergerio also justifies his custom as owing to his father. In Ep. 79, he is specific, stating that he writes to rouse his father’s devotion “through a filial reminder of sorts.”²¹⁶ All the expressions of inadequacy are based on Jerome’s unattainability. At the same time, Vergerio immediately argues that audiences will forgive all shortcomings because of their devotion and admiration for the saint. In Ep. 78, for example, Vergerio refers to his father’s accounts of Jerome’s favors to the family. The stories are the reason for Vergerio’s trust in his father’s inclination to the letter: “Just as there is nothing of which you could speak of with more eagerness, so there is nothing that you yourself could listen to with more pleasure.” Curiously, these statements of relief are precisely the same as in Vergerio’s orations to the monks.²¹⁷ In the letter to Sancto, Vergerio also inserts the same addendum as in the Sermon 8. In the presence of sincere devotion, the style of the oration is immaterial.²¹⁸ The continuation of this letter is unfortunately missing.

Interestingly, the bodies of the two letters to Vergerio’s father are quite distinct. Both keep a rather personal tone, yet the unpreserved Ep. 79 is far more emotional. Similar to the orations delivered in Istria, Vergerio emphasizes Jerome’s role as a divine intercessor and treats him as a patron. Illustrating Jerome’s tie to the Vergerio family as a client-patron relationship, he encourages his father to praise the saint in the way of gratitude for his favors. First, Vergerio makes several passionate exclamations, urging his father to honor St. Jerome and paraphrases

²¹⁵ “Cum enim quarto iam superiore anno quasi voto quodam constitutum a me fuerit ut in singulos annos die illius festo de laudibus suis sermonem agerem idque triennio hoc sedulo prestiterim [...]” Ibid. Cf. Sermon 5.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 186.

²¹⁷ “[Q]uod scio nichil dicere me posse de Hieronymi laudibus quod non magnopere probes.” Ibid. Cf. Sermon 1: “Excitat enim dicentis ingenium auditorum intentus affectus, nec possumus nisi iucunde dicere quod scimus libenter audiri.” And Sermon 5. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 135–36, 51–52.

²¹⁸ “Genus autem orationis, quodcunque fuerit, ita probabis, si ex certa fide veraque devotione emanaverit [...]” Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 93. Cf. Sermon 8.

Seneca to underline this: “For I believe it quite ungracious, indeed, my good father, to pass his day in silence, since [...] to receive a favor without a single word of thanks comes close to denying it.”²¹⁹ He then refers to Jerome’s favors on the part of the family to pass his other miracles in silence. In this manner, he inserts a smart *paralepsis*: “Instead, I will deal with those miracles which I saw with my own eyes.”²²⁰ Again, this announcement is reminiscent of his orations, most closely of Sermon 5, where he weighs whether to start his praises with Jerome’s earthly or saintly aspects. Further, he inserts a lengthy gradation, formed of rhetorical questions, all starting with “Who ...” to illustrate Jerome’s intercession for the family. The gradation reaches its climax by an appeal to St. Jerome as the life savior of Vergerio’s father: “Last but not least, who was it that saved your life, after you have been condemned to death and exposed to many great dangers?”²²¹

In contrast, the body of the other, entirely preserved letter to Vergerio’s father, sounds far more composed. However, it is closely reminiscent of Sermons 8 and especially 9, and analogously its main topic is Jerome’s learning. Vergerio begins by placing Jerome above all other saints. His statement is generic since the only specific virtue justifying Jerome’s excellency is his learning: “If we go through all the saints whose names are celebrated, we will find only a few who could deservingly equal him either in terms of their virtues or in their learning; but certainly, I think, there is no one above him.”²²² Then he passes to the usual catalog of Jerome’s virtues: eloquence, perseverance against his rivals, peaceful conduct with the heretics, and endurance in the desert. Jerome’s lifestyle, according to his teaching, is also

²¹⁹ “[est enim neganti beneficium is qui tacet.” Ibid, 186. Cf. Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 2.1.: “[P]roximus est a negante, qui dubitavit, nullamque iniit gratiam.”

²²⁰ “Nam ut omittam cetera [...] ad ea veniam que ipsemet vidi [...]” Ibid.

²²¹ For leaving his post in order to flee, Vergerio’s father was at first condemned to death. Upon their return to Koper in 1883 he was acquitted, yet the family never rose to the same distinguished position as it had before.

²²² Vergerio, *Epistolario*.

emphasized. This letter is thus highly accomplished and could truly function as a draft for an articulated oration.

The *peroratio* of Ep. 78 is the only one preserved in the three letters and also bears similarities to the orations. However, it is also interesting, since it starts almost verbatim as part of Sermon 8. Vergerio first asserts his inadequacy to the subject one more time yet continues with an immediate promise to carry on with his practice, since it is a way to repay his father's love. Moreover, he directly addresses his father and states that due to the father's devotion to Jerome, Vergerio is convinced of his pleasure also while listening to Vergerio's praise. Another notice that his practice of praising Jerome publicly derives from devotion and not in search of praise evokes Sermon 8 again.²²³ However, then Vergerio immediately forms a *paralepsis* and briefly concludes the letter: "But enough said about this so that I should not appear to want to pass everything in silence or to speak about every single thing exhaustively."²²⁴

The letters, therefore, correspond to Vergerio's orations not only regarding their topics but most conspicuously the way Vergerio develops the epideictic patterns. Moreover, he shows awareness of their close affinities and almost articulates it through synecdoche:

I have spoken about these very things on another occasion in front a large crowd, indeed, not in order to gain praise for myself, but to earn glory and devotion for the saint among all people. Now you alone stand in for the crowd, being even more favorable audience, because I know, there is nothing I could say in praise of Jerome that you would not heartily approve.²²⁵

Thoroughly examined from the new perspective, Vergerio's orations thus prove as far more complex than "somewhat repetitive and simplistic," as some items of the secondary literature label them.²²⁶ The analysis of the rhetorical tropes not only points out their adherence to the classical rhetoric precepts, it also proves the critical effect of the context of the orations'

²²³ Sermon 8. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 224.

²²⁴ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 185.

²²⁵ Cf. Ep. 42. Ibid.

²²⁶ Kallendorf, "Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder." Craig Kallendorf, "Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder," <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0306.xml>.

deliveries on their composition owing to the very precepts of the epideictic genre. Any future research of similar humanist orations to saints should, therefore, register the individual contexts—not only the status of the audience and venue but also the historical background and the author—as important research factors.²²⁷

Creating the typical outlines of Vergerio's orations, this chapter has illustrated the novelty of their form in the sacred context and Vergerio's adaptations of the standard tropes to specific audiences. However, this is a standard characteristic for the epideictic genre, and primarily illustrates Vergerio's creativity. Moving beyond, Vergerio must adapt the classical form of his orations to another, universal factor. As indicated by Frazier, they are a new model of, as Frazier describes it, "Christian revision of classical panegyrics."²²⁸ After examining the appearance of the rhetorical patterns in specific orations, the analysis in the next chapter will continue with Vergerio's adaptations of them to the new sacred "context" and illustrate his Christian reversal—patently assigning priority to eloquence. While describing Jerome's external and internal battles, Vergerio deplores his own rhetorical inadequacy.²²⁹ While noting the abundance of Jerome's merits, he laments his own lack of eloquence. "For if those who are about to pronounce the praise of worldly men find that they do not seem capable of covering those subjects sufficiently, how much more inadequate will one feel who is about to pronounce publicly a panegyric of the saint[,]" Vergerio worries, illustrating the difficulty through a comparison between praising an earthly and celestial subject.²³⁰ With one singular exception, his humility tropes are all based on his rhetoric rather than religious inadequacy. In addition to

²²⁷ In contrast to e.g. Robey, who only ascribes to the context merely "some measure" of importance. Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values," 29.

²²⁸ Alison Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 285.

²²⁹ The metaphor, largely suggested by Cicero and Quintilianus, Cicero, *De oratore* 2.4.156, 2.20.64, Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.5.17–20.

²³⁰ "Nam si de mundanorum hominum laudibus dicutris hoc evenit ut non satis dicere posse videantur, quanto magis enarraturo huius sancti praeconia qui virtute et meritis illustravit [...]." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 163. Cf. Sermon 2. This oration continues the description of the panegyrics further and skillfully develops into an expression of inadequacy.

some previously mentioned tropes, the following chapter will also examine Vergerio's frequent digressions and interpret them in light of his rhetorical program.

4. Matching praise with eloquence

The humility trope, complaining of the orator's inadequacy, was commonplace in ancient rhetoric handbooks.²³¹ However, observing Vergerio's orations, these seem to be one of his most common paths to lengthy digressions. Vergerio's constant fear of "speaking in a disorderly fashion or without sufficient embellishment" and his complaints of unfulfilling the orator's duties draw attention to the guidance that he follows.²³² In lengthy apologies, he compares panegyrics addressed to earthly subjects with those addressed to celestial ones and comments on the course of his speech. His detailed descriptions of the orations' form, following the guidance of the ancient oratory, illustrate his consciousness of the epideictic genre and its adaptations to the sacred context. His letters bear no difference. In the very beginning of one of his letters to his father, for example, Vergerio states: "I wish I could render the honors worthy of the sanctity of his life and the fullness of his merits, yet the subject surpasses the power of my speech—and not only the speech but in fact comprehension itself."²³³ Focusing on Vergerio's rhetorical digressions, the following analysis illustrates how he smartly exploits the epideictic patterns to declare his skillfully designed rhetorical program.

The bluntest announcement of Vergerio's final break with the thematic structure of medieval sermons is indisputably his introduction to Sermon 5. He begins by drawing attention to his omission of the usual biblical verse in the beginning of the oration:

[I] will slightly depart today from the usual manner of delivering a sermon. Because I have not cited a thematic verse from Scripture (a convention that is

²³¹ Alison Frazier, *Possible Lives*, 284. and O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 58. O'Malley mentions warnings against exaggeration in Brandolini's handbook. Kennedy, *Classical*, 127–29.

²³² "[I]ncomposite aut inornate dicere" McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 174–75.

²³³ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 184.

no longer observed by the most up-to-date-preachers), I will immediately begin by praying that the most glorious virgin assists me.²³⁴

Despite his caveat that the omission was already following contemporary practice, such an explicit explanation emphasizes Vergerio's novelty. His declaration is, however, far from genuine, since not a singular example of sermons following classical norms has been found up to date.²³⁵ Vergerio's opening remark thus serves only to draw attention to the form and the individuality of his approach.

Less straightforward, yet telling, are Vergerio's descriptions of the oration's form in his constant confessions of inadequacy scattered throughout. Orations in praise of saints seem to present an extremely problematic genre for Vergerio. Sermon 4, for example, appears as an exceptionally extended expression of inadequacy, based on the comparison of praising worldly men and praising saints. After the initial commitment to praising St. Jerome, Vergerio expresses a wish to have two things: the ability to speak skillfully enough to encompass all of Jerome's merits and the ability to praise him according to his desire. Moving entirely from Jerome, he then starts to describe panegyrics as their genre. This kind of oratory, especially when addressed to a saint, is disappointing to an orator's satisfaction since usually, the opposite of his wishes takes place when he is delivering praise: the ability to praise adequately diminishes as the number of merits increases. To this end, Vergerio continually worries about his audience's attention. In Sermon 5, for example, he disputes:

I do not want to lengthen the speech and thereby cause you annoyance.
Although it would have been wrong for me to fear that you could ever be

²³⁴ "Cum bona venia vestra praetermitteram nunc parumper solitum morem sermocinandi, et, omisso themate (qui mos iam apud modernos deciderat) primo gloriosissimam virginem ad auxilium mihi vocabo." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 172.

²³⁵ Ibid, 21. McManamon argues that Vergerio also remarks this particular controversy in one of his letters, namely Epist. 42. Nevertheless, since in this letter Vergerio is commenting on his general practice of speaking, his remark does not necessarily refer to the omission of the biblical verse: "I am used to talking in front of the people; a great crowd always came to hear about his deeds and his praises. Many of these were illiterate and only took notice of the words themselves and of my gestures; many others would pay attention only to my oratory and criticize any infelicities; there were some even, if I might say so, that would actually learn [from it]." "[M]ulti praeterea indocti qui nudas voces gestusque notarent, plurimi qui dicendi tantum genus adverterent argueruntque si quid ineptius excidisset [...]" Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 93.

annoyed while you are listening to a speech on these matters, it is still right that I should be careful not to cause you boredom or bother you in any way whatsoever.²³⁶

Despite his worries, Vergerio cannot do differently but continues his oration. Analogous to the *exordia*, where he carefully emphasizes that despite his failing rhetorical skills, his desire to praise Jerome increases annually. Moreover, he blames for it the subject of his speech and exclaims: “Jerome bridles at the reins and does not know how to be held back, and he often slips out of my grasp.”²³⁷ To illustrate his difficulties, Vergerio frequently enumerates the usually celebrated *topoi* of praise. In Sermons 2 and 4, he compares the catalogs of praiseworthy deeds in panegyrics to earthy men to those in panegyrics to saints. Sermon 4 is particularly telling, listing conflicts, victories, triumphs. Sermon 6 proposes courageous deeds and instruction in ethical conduct through writing.²³⁸ In Sermon 5, Vergerio is even more specific:

If I will have resolved to speak first about the topics that customarily motivate us to praise men of our own age who are engaged in the business of the world and to praise the pagans as well— topics like one’s literary expertise, one’s morals, the supreme integrity of one’s life— I have procured material so abundant that I could almost never cover it in a speech.²³⁹

In addition to prolonging the speech, the abundance of merits makes it a hard task for the orator to design it, claims Vergerio, since he cannot anticipate an acceptable conclusion to it. “No speaker can start his speech as long as he sees that he has no good way to end it,” he says in Sermon 4.²⁴⁰ The problem of starting the speech without anticipating its conclusion shows the

²³⁶ “Etsi timendum non sit vobis haec audientibus accidere id posse, attamen aequum est esse me eum qui studeat ne taedium aut ulla molestia quovis modo oborietur vobis.” McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 196–97.

²³⁷ Ibid, 192–3. For the typical expressions of inadequacy in *exordia* see e.g. Sermon 8: “[I] now have a distinct impression that my desire to praise him has grown greater through the years even as my ability to praise him has diminished.” “[I]ta deinceps per annos affectus sum ut augeri mihi desiderium sentiam, minui facultatem.” *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 222–23.

²³⁸ McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 162–3 and 206–7.

²³⁹ Ibid, 178–9.

²⁴⁰ “Nescit enim initium invenire dum videt sibi non patere exitum.” Ibid, 159–63. Cf. Sermon 2.

emphasis on the importance of unity in the epideictic oration.²⁴¹ Such priorities and the catalogs of deeds, described above, follow the ancient guidelines and nicely illustrate Vergerio's break with the medieval manuals.²⁴²

Moreover, there are some similar comments on the orations' form. There, Vergerio appears to almost blame his subject for his inconsistencies with the thematic form. In Sermon 2, he discusses his difficulties, saying that even though the multitude of merits is indeed an encouragement to start, the orator's task is still vexatious. In contrast to his prior complaints, now the conclusion of the speech seems easy to Vergerio, but:

it is extremely difficult to formulate an *exordium* for an oration when you find yourself in the midst of such compelling motives to praise the man. Who could possibly claim that in such a case, it is easy to find a topic from which he could begin his speech and feel a sense of satisfaction?²⁴³

The phrase is repeated almost verbatim in Sermons 4 and 5, and Vergerio explains that "each of those topics virtually demands to be the first one mentioned and thereby become the focus of the sermon's *exordium*."²⁴⁴ Here Vergerio seems to refer to the individual topic of the thematic sermon and the biblical verse, which should guide its course.²⁴⁵ Indeed, all Jerome's typical attributes are praised in the orations. Apart from the orations to the monks, it is hard to decipher an individual message. Yet this bears no effect on their unity. Vergerio's simulated worries, smartly enclosed into the expressions of inadequacy, thus prove to be only standard tropes, paraphrased from the examples of the ancient rhetors. The multitude of merits seems almost an ironic explanation of Vergerio's omission of the thematic verse. The orator should bear with his inadequate rhetorical skills, as Vergerio summarizes in Sermon 4, and uses his

²⁴¹ E.g. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 43.

²⁴² See Chapter 1 and O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, 86.

²⁴³ Verum cum in tam ampla rerum area difficile sit initium dicendi facere, aliquanto difficilior erit exitum orationis invenire. Unde enim quis in tot tantisque rebus aut principium ordietur aut ubi sistat orationem inveniet?" McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 144.

²⁴⁴ "[U]numquodque se primum dici principiumque sermonis esse postulat." Ibid, 176.

²⁴⁵ See Chapter 1.

inadequacy also to quote Jerome's exact words: "Since no one could express it more elegantly, let me now quote his own words."²⁴⁶

Appealing to his subject of praise, Vergerio constantly emphasizes the singularity of his praises. In Sermon 5, he begins in a nearly forewarning tone:

Today I do not have to deliver a sermon to you, most distinguished men, about the study of letters (as I am often accustomed to do), nor about matters of war that are gratifying to recall in proportion as they were difficult to conduct, nor finally about any dealings that apply to the common rights or private affairs of human beings. I must rather speak of belief and sanctity.²⁴⁷

Similar declarations are frequent in the *exordia*. In Sermon 9, Vergerio forms an almost identical announcement but immediately adds that despite focusing on matters which pertain to holiness, he would "never deny that Jerome was exceedingly learned in secular letters as well." He immediately ventures in a lengthy appraisal of his writings.²⁴⁸ Jerome's learning and also sometimes his other entirely human aspects—for example, his endurance of his rivals and of his temptations during penitence—is augmented by the level of "divine." Since these are available for imitation, Vergerio seems much more eloquent while praising them at large. In a like manner, on a later point of Sermon 5, he acknowledges two "parallel paths," either addressing Jerome's earthly deeds or, what is more important, his holiness. Pondering the topics and his own ability to speak, he decides to "postpone for now the more important topics and begin by touching upon those which make it possible even for ordinary men to win acclaim."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ "Quod quoniam elegantius aliter dici non potest, eius ipsius verba subiciantur." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 164–65. Cf. Sermon 2, which is less specific.

²⁴⁷ "Sermo mihi hodie ad vos habendus est, viri clarissimi, non de studiis litterarum ut saepe soleo, non de bellicis rebus quae ut difficiles fieri, ita iucundae sunt memoratu, non denique de ullis negotiis quae aut ad republica iura hominum aut ad privatas res pertineant, sed de religione et sanctitate." Ibid, 170–71. Cf. Sermon 9.

²⁴⁸ "[Q]uamquam et in saecularibus litteris apprime fuerit eruditus." Ibid, 236–37.

²⁴⁹ "Nam, ut maiora omittam et ea primum attingam in quibus mediocres etiam viri laudem sibi vindicare possunt." Ibid, 178–79.

However, the postponed matters of sanctity are never approached. Vergerio densely scatters not only the *perorationes*, but the entire orations with *paralepsis* of Jerome's saintly deeds or his miracles, carefully disguised by worried remarks either about the orations' length or his inadequacy to praise the subject. "[I] will have filled the entire day and night with my words and then continued for months and years, I will only have addressed a few from the vast array of topics one might address," he despairs in Sermon 5, when trying to address Jerome's sanctity, since "what person would realistically expect to cover in a sermon all the works of sanctity."²⁵⁰ Besides, as he explains in Sermon 8, even if that could be the case, in speaking of Jerome, one should inevitably add that he featured all the listed qualities in an extraordinary manner and to a degree, incomparable to anyone else. As he concludes: "matters unquestionably far more excellent according to a different standard must comprise the focus when you preach on the saints of God."²⁵¹

Exploiting his subject of praise, Vergerio thus craftily augments his inadequacy by appealing to the saint's utter unattainability: "[I] am accustomed to feel a certain regret and to consider a Latin oration inadequate because I am not permitted to proclaim the most extraordinary praises in appropriately extraordinary words."²⁵² Similarly, after ardently pointing out all of St. Jerome's praiseworthy human aspects in one of the letters to his father, he concludes in a self-reproaching tone: "as if I thought it possible for his praise to be contained thoroughly in a speech or as if the praises of the saints were not above all the power of our speech and of our mind."²⁵³ It is not only the abundance of Jerome's merits but especially their magnitude that causes Vergerio's rhetoric shortcomings. In Sermon 8, he emphasizes his

²⁵⁰ "Nam si diem verbis egero noctemque et menses et annos una iunxero, pauca dicam eorum collatione quae dici iam possent [...] Quis, inquam, omnia sanctitatis opera [...] comprehensurum sermone se speret?" Ibid, 184–85.

²⁵¹ "Quae profecto multo excellentius alio quodammodo in Sanctis Dei veniunt praedicanda." Ibid, 163.

²⁵² "Quamobrem aegre ferre soleo et Latinae orationi indignari, quod propriis atque exquisitis nominibus exquisitissimas laudes efferre non licet[.]" Ibid, 228–29.

²⁵³ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 185.

awareness of the saints' incomprehensibility to an extreme level, by branding for a fool anyone of a different opinion:

I say that even though I cannot imagine what praise one who is about to speak here should expect, for the magnitude of the subject matter overwhelms all force of eloquence and the entire sermon can never approach the excellence of its subject's merits. It is especially inappropriate that I should harbor such fantasies. If I should entertain any idea of the sort, I would clearly be acting like a fool [...] But if someone should ask me what I consider the principal and most prominent reason to praise this glorious saint, I will respond without any hesitation. In my opinion, there is no human tongue that can worthily utter Jerome's praises [...]²⁵⁴

In Vergerio's opinion, therefore, Jerome's excellence is not only unattainable, but also cannot be extolled enough. What is more, it is this reason in particular that ultimately proves his exceptionality, and Vergerio's rhetoric skills are thus by default condemned to fail. However, this seems to be almost intentional in Vergerio's orations. His constant rhetoric digressions and theoretic remarks point to singular features of the form of his orations, thus putting in focus his oratory rather than Jerome and his attributes. The loquacious expressions of inadequacy are exaggerated to such a level that they seem artificial. Their frequency diverts the attention from Jerome, and rather points to the development of Vergerio's ongoing oration. By creating a vivid narrative of the orator in battle to praise his subject worthily, Vergerio thus produces illustrative examples of classical orations, which take material from the context of contemporary devotional practice.²⁵⁵ His emphasis becomes even more obvious when he concludes: "to do justice to that subject in a sermon, you would need the eloquence of Jerome himself."²⁵⁶ The

²⁵⁴ "Quod si ex me quispiam quaerat quam huius sancti gloriosi primam potissimamque laudem existimem, hanc scilicet incunctanter respondebo, quod meo quidem iudicio non possit digne humano ore laudari." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 224–25.

²⁵⁵ Vergerio's entirely secular program was discussed before, see Combi: "[T]anti studiosi discepoli, divenuti poi illustri maestri, acuiro la mente non meno appunto negli esemplari di S. Girolamo che in quelli di Cicerone." Carlo Combi and T. Luciani, *Epistole Di Pietro Paolo Vergerio Seniore Da Capodistria* (Venice 1887). Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values." Cf. Farkas Gábor Kiss, "Origin Narratives: Pier Paolo Vergerio and the Beginnings of Hungarian Humanism," *The Hungarian Historical Review* 8, no. 3 (2019).

²⁵⁶ "[A]d quantam digne praedicam eius ipisus eloquencia esset." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 232–33. The sentence recalls Quintilianus' words from his *Institutio Oratoria*: "[...] so it happened that Cicero became regarded not the name of a man, but of eloquence" (10.1.112). *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 233.

call for unity in Vergerio's orations therefore seems clear: it is not only devotion such as Jerome's that an orator requires for an appropriate praise, but also the eloquence.

Conclusion

The main subject of this thesis, Pier Paolo Vergerio's *Sermones pro Sancto Hieronymo*, represents a significant and original work of a creative humanist.²⁵⁷ Moreover, it also presents one with an entry point into an area of scholarship that is still underdeveloped: the framework of humanist orations in honor of saints. One of the main objectives was to draw closer attention to the significance of Vergerio's key innovation, the adaptation of the epideictic genre to the new sacred context. Exemplified in the orations addressed to a Christian saint, this approach made an extraordinary impact not only on the form but also on the contents of the orations. In contrast to previous examinations that focused exclusively either on the stylistic features of the orations or their function within the humanist cult of St. Jerome, the aim herein was to connect the two aspects and point out Vergerio's originality. Employing a new method for the analysis, the present thesis complements previous interpretations to a high degree. Comparing the orations also to Vergerio's letters has presented a new angle of examination. The in-depth and thoroughgoing reading of the orations sheds light on the amalgamation of classicizing elements with hagiography and even the contemporaneous ambiance in their contents.

To illustrate the contributions of this thesis, a summary of the findings is in order. Vergerio's orations present a model for the public worship of a saint according to the classical precepts of the epideictic rhetoric. The illumination of these is of utmost importance for engaging with humanist panegyrics as a format. Compared to the earlier thematic sermons, these panegyrics de-emphasize the didactic component and, instead, aim for a captivating display of their eloquence. The absence of a fixed biblical theme enabled the authors to create combinations out of a vast array of topics and they preferred selected human aspects, already

²⁵⁷ In the preface of his edition McManamon praises him as "one of the most creative voices of the third generation of Italian humanists." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, I.

categorized by the ancient Greek orators. Nevertheless, the orations share a consistent structure, they are coherent, and each can be observed as an independent piece. This structure can be loosely described as consisting of three parts: the *exordium* or the preface, the body of the orations, and the *peroratio* or the conclusion.

Since the focus of these panegyrics is chiefly on the audience, the standard catalogs of virtues and deeds within them serve to portray a figure that the audience could easily imagine and find enjoyment in hearing its praise.²⁵⁸ Accordingly, Vergerio's laudation is outlined in ten lively orations, which concentrate on the human aspects of St. Jerome and omit most of his miraculous deeds. Subjecting the orations to individual examination one by one, it is possible to perceive their shared features, when they are delivered before the same audiences or at the same venues. However, Vergerio's adjustments go beyond the catalog of Jerome's deeds. They are palpable also in how he deploys rhetorical patterns, drawing from classical handbooks as those by Cicero and Quintilian, yet employing an entirely genuine approach. Consequently, the message and the tone of the orations also vary, as they are adapted to the specific audiences not only concerning their portrayal of Jerome but also in the manner they display Vergerio's rhetorical performance.

Two of his most conspicuous devices are justifications of praise as everyone's duty and humility tropes, such as complaints about his rhetorical inadequacy. Vergerio most frequently argues for his duty to praise either by reference to his devotion or to the traditional instruction according to which praising illustrious individuals motivates the audience to imitate their virtuous conduct. Statements of this nature are often further developed, resulting in similarly formed epideictic patterns, when faced with similar audiences. In orations delivered to monks, for example, Vergerio demonstrates praise to be instructional on the grounds of Jerome's

²⁵⁸ Since the present study discusses the orations in honor of saints, it does not treat the reproachful function of epideictic genre.

biographies of the desert fathers. Writing about their lives, Jerome was motivated to imitate their austere lifestyle as well. In contrast, speaking in front of secular audiences, Vergerio characterizes the same kind of practice as already ancient custom, paraphrasing classical authors.²⁵⁹

The orations in the monastic environments sound reproachful. Not only does Vergerio emphasize Jerome's extreme endurance and piety while enumerating his deeds, but his rhetorical patterns also echo blame, mainly colored by irony. The usual complaints of inadequacy are missing in these orations and instead are substituted by ironic and overconfident remarks targeting the audience's fixed attention since the oration is treating matters of faith. Jerome's lifestyle according to his teaching is highlighted and the monks are exhorted to imitate it. However, the sermonizing tone is belied by Vergerio's sarcastic addenda that tell his audience not to worry: being as they are inhabitants of sacred environments, their conduct is surely blameless.

In the orations delivered in Istria, Vergerio argues that on account of closeness of Jerome's birthplace, the members of the audience have a special duty to praise him. Yet, it is not only Jerome that Vergerio speaks of. The reference to Stridon becomes a springboard for various digressions. First, he rejects the theory of Jerome's Stridon being the contemporary Stregna nearby. Then he praises Jerome's constant travelling in search of knowledge and interprets it as the saint's utter indifference about his earthly whereabouts. None of these orations are reproaching and all of them encourage the audience to practice devotion towards Jerome in terms of a patron-client relationship.²⁶⁰ Curiously, in these orations Vergerio never mentions his personal devotion or speaks of Jerome as his family's patron saint.

²⁵⁹ E.g. Ovid in Sermon 2, McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 143. Seneca in Ep. 78. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 185.

²⁶⁰ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, 121.

In contrast, his orations in front of the papal court are extremely emotional. As one would expect, they highlight Jerome's piety, yet subtly promote his learning above all—through smartly exploited inadequacy complaints, in which Vergerio contrasts his poor rhetorical skills to Jerome's eloquence. In addition, in these orations Vergerio fervently announces his personal devotion to the saint and establishes him as a patron saint. In this way, he gives a perfect augmentation of the standard justification of praise, ardently digressing into a lamentation for his recently passed father, the legacy of whose devotion to Jerome is now passed on to him. The emotional effect of his speech increases the plausibility of Vergerio's praise.

To point out the affinities between the orations, the first part of the research concentrated on the alterations of their contents according to the contexts of their deliveries. Vergerio's orations are inspected as a series of case studies and subjected to comparative reading. I created structured outlines of Vergerio's orations and offered them as a catalog of independent pieces.

In the textual analysis, I compared the orations to each other in order to establish possible links between them. I used the rhetorical tropes of the justifications of praise as duty and the humility tropes in the form of complaints of inadequacy as the primary variables. The orations were grouped according to the contexts of their deliveries, and I interpreted their resemblances. Additionally, I observed the correspondence of Vergerio's orations to McManamon's schematic outline. In a similar manner, I analyzed Vergerio's three letters in praise of St. Jerome.²⁶¹ The fact that it is possible to apply the same method of examination to the two formats already indicates affinities between them and, as expected, the epideictic patterns faithfully repeat the orations' themes.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 91–93, 184–87.

²⁶² Robey remarks only the similarities of some topics and does not take in account rhetorical patterns. Robey, "P. P. V. The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values," 32.

The in-depth textual analysis of the epideictic patterns opened the stage also to the final chapter, concentrating primarily on Vergerio's adjustments to the sacred context. I pointed out how Vergerio avails of the standard humility tropes and omissions of miracles to honor the saint, yet simultaneously display his eloquence. For the shortcomings of his speech, Vergerio blames Jerome whose praiseworthy qualities are so absolute that no earthly orator could have suitably listed them. In lengthy apologias, he compares the breadth of Jerome's miracles with river flows and oceans, paraphrasing Cicero;²⁶³ only to finally omit the miracles entirely and conclude with a *paralepsis*—grounded in the oration's length and opening yet another spot to reproach his own rhetorical skill. With a singular exception, all the humility tropes concern Vergerio's oratory and not religious inadequacy. In this way, he astutely manipulates both the genre and the subject of his praise, highlighting the importance of the eloquence at every breath.

The observations of the analysis, therefore, attest to the considerably higher value and accomplishment of Vergerio's orations than acknowledged by the scholarship thus far. The thesis offers a re-evaluation of Vergerio's work, pointing out the critical effect not only of his adherence to general classical precepts, but especially his original developments of the patterns of the epideictic genre. The translation of the letters in the Appendix is the first translation of any of Vergerio's letters in their entirety and they serve as an additional illustration of his program of alignment.

Since the orations honor the same subject and are pronounced by the same author, they offer a perfect circumstance to point out the significance of the context of delivery and typical rhetorical devices. Based on the comparative study of the orations and taking in consideration the humanist background, the thesis also calls for the reinterpretation of some specific internal

²⁶³ "Omne itaque genus vitae laudabilis hic pretiosus sanctus excercuit." McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint*, 154.

elements. One of the topics brought to light again are Vergerio's references to his family's ancient tradition of praising St. Jerome. As indicated in the analysis, these appear to be a typical humanist device to induce the authenticity of their panegyrics. The utilization of historical background to give authority to a speech was acknowledged by contemporary writers. Leonardo Bruni, for example, openly renounced the historical fidelity of praise while commenting on his panegyric to the Florentine City: "History must follow the truth, but praise raises many things above the truth."²⁶⁴ Vergerio deftly raises Jerome above all. Yet, in his orations he appears to point out that the singular path to the proper devotion to the saint—not only through imitations of his piety, but also and especially, through emulating his eloquence.

In this manner, the thesis links the two aspects of previous research: Vergerio's stylistic approach and his representation of St. Jerome. It combines them in the humanist context and emphasizes his genuine alignment of epideictic patterns with contemporaneous and even local themes. Moreover, it provides new angles of examination: a revised method to analyze the orations according to their outlines, the interpretation of rhetorical patterns in the analysis, the comparison of the orations to the letters, and the consideration of each oration's context. However, the research I have undertaken here had to contend with obvious limitations of space and leaves much to be explored still. Following Vergerio's panegyrics, epideictic orations to saints became a popular format in the public worship. Vergerio uses diverse humility tropes to illustrate Jerome's utter attainability by appealing to the lack of his rhetorical skill. In what way is the trope employed by other contemporary and subsequent authors of the panegyrics to

²⁶⁴ "Aliud est historia aliud laudatio. Historia quidem veritatem sequi debet, laudatio verum multa supra veritatem extolit." L. Bruni *Epistolarum Libri VIII*, ed. L. Mehus (Florence, 1714), ep VIII. 4. Pointed out in David Rundle, "'Not So Much Praise as Precept': Erasmus, Panegyric and the Renaissance Art of Teaching Princes," in *Pedagogy and Power. Rhetorics of Classical Learning (Ideas in Context, 50)*, ed. Yun Lee Too, Niall Livingstone (1998). Rundle adds: "Neither Bruni nor Salutati imagine panegyrics to be truthful, they merely claim that their lies are meant to do good or give pleasure."

saints? How do they adapt their justifications of praise as a duty? Do they refer to it as everyone's personal or communal duty?

A consistent and complex description of humanist epideictic orations in praise of Christian saints is still missing. Through the example of Vergerio's orations, this thesis points out the complexity and relevance of the subject. It indicates the demand for an incorporative approach that is more suitable than the previous sectional analysis. I hope this work will contribute to providing a more comprehensive characterization of humanist orations to saints, considering also the contemporary context. Because of the present limitations, I have not proceeded to further analysis of the subsequent orations in honor of St. Jerome. Nevertheless, I believe this thesis is a promising starting point for a wider discussion of epideictic orations to saints, as an independent species, which has been overlooked and undervalued by secondary scholarship.

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Appendices

XXXXII²⁶⁵

Pier Paolo Vergerio to Santo dei Pellegrini

There is nothing at this moment which I should rather do or which I should bring myself to do with more pleasure than to speak to you about St. Jerome. Because, you see, four years ago I made a sort of vow to deliver a speech in his praise every year on his feast day and I have done so diligently for three years now. It is only this year that I have failed to do so; certainly not out of negligence – which I wish had as little as possible effect on me, but because the journey to Tuscany that I went on this past summer took longer than I intended. The debt which I have incurred this way weights heavily and depressingly on my thoughts; I will now relieve myself and pay it to you, whom I find to be the most appropriate relation I could ever procure.²⁶⁶ For what is more appropriate than to talk of saintliness with a saintly man and with the most learned one about learning.²⁶⁷

I am used to talking in front of the people; a great crowd always came to hear about his deeds and his praises. Many of these were illiterate and only took notice of the words themselves and of my gestures; many others would pay attention only to my oratory and criticize any infelicities; there were some even, if I might say so, that would actually learn [from it]. But now you alone will do better than a multitude for me and will be one standing in for all the others. Because you see, neither could I speak of this saint with more delight than you would derive from listening, nor am I afraid that you would fail to understand me or that you were in need of some instruction, since [to you] nobody surpasses him either in eloquence

²⁶⁵ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 91–93. The letter bears no mark that would indicate the date or place of its origin. Smith dates it between the years 1392–1394. The *terminus post quem* is Pellegrini's death in May 1396, in the summer of 1395 Vergerio was in Padua and not in Tuscany as he states in the letter and his first speech could not have taken place before 1388, thus making the year 1392 the earliest fourth year from his vow (“cum enim quarto iam superiore anno”).

²⁶⁶ “[Q]uo neminem, ut arbitror, magis idoneum hospitem assequi possem.” Vergerio uses the title “hospes” to address Pellegrini, which could according to their relationship mean also “best friend.”

²⁶⁷ “Quid enim magis convenit quam et de sanctitate cum Sancto et cum doctissimo de litteris agere?” Vergerio is playing with words here, taking advantage of the meaning of Pellegrini's first name in Italian.

or in the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.²⁶⁸ The style of speech, however it might be, you will appreciate, if it springs out of true and honest devotion [...]

LXXVIII²⁶⁹

Pier Paolo Vergerio to Vergerio dei Vergerii

There is nothing more pleasant that I could do with you today than that both of us in turn acknowledge the praises and the merits of St. Jerome, whose feast day is just now at hand.²⁷⁰ I wish I could render the honors worthy of the sanctity of his life and the fullness of his merits, yet the subject surpasses the power of my speech – and not only the speech but in fact comprehension itself – for so far am I from being able to reveal how much I understand of the greatness of his virtues as I am from true understanding of the greatness of his glory.²⁷¹

And especially concerning our faith: if we go through all the saints whose names are celebrated, we will find only a few, who could deservingly equal him either in terms of their virtues or in their learning; but certainly, I think, there is no one above him. Because, you see, if we seek firmness of faith or certainty of hope in him, nothing surpasses him; if we look for ardent Christian love, we can find no one more fervent than him. By his preaching he was an apostle, an evangelist by his writing, he was a hermit by his choice of dwelling, and if we define martyrdom in terms of suffering, he was a martyr throughout his entire life; he was a teacher not just in words but also in his exemplary deeds, and he was renowned not only by his eloquence, but by his entire life.²⁷² Because, you see, the best sort of the teaching is the one that by personal example and lifestyle confirms what it recommends in words. About this, the preachers of our times do not seem to care too much; all their effort goes into speaking well, none into acting well. As if, however, in matters of faith one should rival in eloquence, not in the way one lives, or as if heaven would be open to speeches rather than to excellent and holy

²⁶⁸ Perfect parallelism with the previous description of the crowd, lacking all the virtues that Pellegrini possesses.

²⁶⁹ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 184–85. The letter is dated on the 30th of September 1396 in Padua. Vergerio's name also appears in the *Monumenti* of the University in Padua at the time.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Sermon 6. John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 196–97.

²⁷¹ Cf. Sermon 8. John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 220.

²⁷² A typical parallelism introducing a climax, which is often repeated or paraphrased in Vergerio's orations.

men. Therefore, whoever teaches well and lives as he teaches is a real teacher. Whoever does otherwise is liar who condemns himself by his own judgement. Read Jerome's books and letters, they are full of every kind of most holy teachings. Look at his life: he will take you beyond all teaching, as if for him it were easier to act than to speak. Because, how could one speak of his abstinence and his self-control, of his compassion and his patience, how could one speak of the persecution from his rivals, the confrontation with the heretics, of how valiantly he resisted the former and how much more valiantly he repelled the latter? How could one speak about his trials in the desert, of his perilous peregrinations and of everything else, which is long and well remembered? For it seems as if he had decided never to turn his back on anything as long as he was turning his back to the world and its traps.

I do not know how becoming it is for me to praise here in such detail the holy man, as if I thought it possible for his praise to be contained thoroughly in a speech or as if the praises of the saints were not above all the power of our speech and of our mind.²⁷³ But I am compelled to carry on with this costume by my devotion, to put it like this, and at the same time by my affection for you and in order to repay your love. Just as there is nothing of which you could speak of with more eagerness, so there is nothing that you yourself could listen to with more pleasure.²⁷⁴ I have spoken about these very things on another occasion in front a large crowd, indeed, not in order to gain praise for myself, but to earn glory and devotion for the saint among all people.²⁷⁵ Now you alone stand in for the crowd, being even more favorable audience,²⁷⁶ because I know, there is nothing I could say in praise of Jerome that you would not heartily approve. But enough said about this, so that I should not appear to want to pass everything in silence or to speak about every single thing exhaustively. Farewell.

In Padua, on the day before the Kalends of October, 1396.

²⁷³ Cf. Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* 1: "Ut qui illi virtutes largitus est, mihi ad narrandas eas sermonem tribuat, ut facta dictis exaequantur. Eorum enim, qui fecere, virtus tanta habetur, quantum eas verbis potuere extollere praeclara ingenia."

²⁷⁴ Cf. Sermon 1. "Nec possumus nisi iucunde dicere quod scimus libenter audiri." John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 135–37 and Ep. 42. "Nam neque ego iocundius dicere huius sancti res potero quam tu audies [...]" Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 93.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Sermon 8. "Sanctissimum doctorem fidei nostrae Hieronymum, cuius dies solemnis adest, ita mihi dari cupio recte laudare ut in eo laudando laudem ipse meam non quaeram." John M. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder and Saint Jerome*, 220.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Ep. 42. "Solebam ad populum dicere, quo semper ingens de illius rebus laudibusque [...] sed nunc tu michi solus plus eris quam populus, et unus pro omnibus." Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 93.

LXXVIII²⁷⁷

The same to the same.

Most beloved father, the sacred feast of our glorious protector St. Jerome urges me to write to you something for the occasion, and to rouse your devotion through a filial reminder of sorts to celebrate this day with exceptional faith and singular joy, although your piety is always devoted to his service. For I believe it quite ungracious, indeed, my good father, to pass his day in silence, since it was from him that we have received such abundant favors and such generous gifts – I believe in fact, to receive a favor without a single word of thanks comes close to denying it.²⁷⁸ Thus, even if we are far apart in body, yet closely bound together in spirit and mind, let us pass this solemn day in rendering grace with sincere devotion and pious joy.

Because, you see, we need to believe firmly that he will generously confirm what he has already bestowed upon us, when he sees that his servants' minds are well set and well disposed towards himself, and that he will bestow on those who please him even greater benefits. He will also show to those, who passed away the path towards the heavenly abode through his intercession and his prayers, which is what we all wish for.

In fact, my dear father, I have learned and firmly impressed into my mind many benefits granted to us by him of which you spoke to me in the past. These, as you have seen and experienced by yourself came to us by his gift and grace, so that even if you tried denying it, your conscience would not allow you to. I will leave aside the other undisputed miracles performed by him on our behalf, which you used to tell about before that famous upheaval, known almost by the whole world in which we too would have capsized, had it not been for his help.²⁷⁹ Instead I will deal with those miracles, which I saw with my own eyes. Who was it that let us out alive from so many traps laid against us during that wartime clash, when everything was filled with terror and was collapsing? Who was it that carried us safe and sound from the devastation and smoldering ashes of our pillaged homeland? Or, who was it that after we had left our ancestral land and received a friendly welcome on foreign soil, took us back

²⁷⁷ Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 186–87. There are no marks to indicate the date and the location of this letter. According to the style and content Smith groups it with the Paduan letters from the year 1397.

²⁷⁸ “[est enim neganti beneficium is qui tacet.” Paraphrasing Seneca, *De Beneficiis* 2.1.: “[P]roximus est a negante, qui dubitavit, nullamque iniit gratiam.”

²⁷⁹ Vergerio is referring to the Chioggia war and the fire in Koper in 1380, which made the family flee their hometown to Cividale. Vergerio, *Epistolario*, 187.

home and made us dwell in safety?²⁸⁰ Last but not least, who was it that saved your life, after you have been condemned to death and exposed to many great dangers?²⁸¹ Who else kept it safe if not the one to whose care you have entrusted it!

²⁸⁰ Here the reference is Vergil's *Aeneid*. Vergerio is gradually intensifying the effect of his speech by introducing a *gradatio* through a set of parallel rhetorical questions.

²⁸¹ For leaving his post in order to flee, Vergerio's father was at first condemned to death. Upon the family's return to Koper in 1883 he was acquitted, yet the family never rose to the same distinguished position as it had before.