

LÁSZLÓ TAKÁCS

THE PRESENTS OF EUSTOCHIUM

(THE LETTER 31 OF HIERONYMUS)¹

Summary: In 384 AD, on the anniversary of the martyrdom of St Peter and Paul, St Jerome wrote a short letter (Letter 31) to Eustochium. In it, he thanked her for the presents (doves, epistels and bracelets) that Eustochium, his pupil, had sent him for the celebration. In the study the author attempts to shed light on the true nature of these gifts.

Key words: St Jerome, Eustochium, Letter 31, presents.

On the 29th of June² in 384, on the day of the martyrdom, i.e., the heavenly birthday of St. Peter, Hieronymus wrote a short letter in which he thanked the presents that Paula's daughter had sent him on the occasion of the festival.³ In the corpus of the letters of Hieronymus letter 31 reads as follows:

1. Parua specie, sed caritate magna sunt munera accepisse a uirgine armillas, epistulas et columbas. et quoniam mel in Dei sacrificiis non offertur, nimia dulcedo arte mutata est et quadam, ut ita dicam, piperis austeritate condita. apud Deum enim nihil uoluptuosum, nihil tantum suaue placet, nihil quod non in se habeat et mordacis aliquid ueritatis. pascha Christi cum amaritudinibus manducatur.

2. Festus est dies, et natalis beati Petri festius solito concinendus, ita tamen, ut scripturarum cardinem iocularis sermo non fugiat, nec a praescripto palaestrae nostrae longius euagemur. armillis in Ezechihele ornatur Hierusalem; Baruch epistulas accepit ab Hieremia; in columbae specie Spiritus sanctus adlabitur. itaque ut te aliquid et piperis mordeat et pristini libelli etiam nunc recorderis, caue ne operis ornamenta dimittas quae uerae armillae sunt brachiorum; ne epistulam pectoris tui scindas quam a Baruch traditam nouacula rex profanus incidit; ne ad similitudi-

¹ This article was written within the framework of OTKA program F 029866.

² Until the end of the 19th century publishers dated the letter to 385 but – I will treat this problem in my essay – more recent publishers rightly date it to a year earlier, 384.

³ About Eustochium's life consult Paul ANTIN: *Recueil sur saint Jerome*. Collection Latomus 95, Bruxelles 1968. 321–325.

nem Ephraim per Osee audias: ‘facta es *i n s i p i e n s u t c o l u m b a*. <Nimium>, respondebis, <austere et, quod festo non conueniat diei.> talibus ipsa muneribus prouocasti; dum dulcibus amara sociata sunt, et a nobis paria recipies: laudem amaritudo comitabitur.

3. Verum – ne uidear dona minuisse – accepimus et canistrum cerasiis refertum talibus et tam uirginali uerecundia rubentibus, ut ea nunc a Lucullo delata existimarim; siquidem hoc genus pomi Ponto et Armenia subiugatis de Cerasunto primus Romam pertulit, unde et e patria arbor nomen accepit. igitur, quia in scripturis canistrum ficis plenum legimus, cerasia uero non inuenimus, in eo quo allatum est, id quod allatum est praedicamus, optamusque te de illis pomis fieri, quae contra templum Dei sunt de quibus Deus dicit: q u a e b o n a b o n a u a l d e. Nihil quippe saluator medium amat, et sicuti frigidum non refugiens calidis delectatur ita tepidos in Apocalypsi uomere uelle se loquitur. Vnde nobis sollicitius prouidendum ut sollemnem diem non tam ciborum abundantia quam spiritus exultatione celebremus, quia ualde absurdum est nimia saturitate honorare uelle martyrem quem sciamus Deo placuisse ieiuniis. ita tibi semper comedendum est ut cibum et oratio sequatur et lectio. Quod si aliquibus displicet, apostoli uerba cantato: *s i a d h u c h o m i n i b u s p l a c e r e m , C h r i s t i a n c i l l a n o n e s s e m*.⁴

This letter is not among the best-known letters of Hieronymus: as far as I know it has not yet been thoroughly analysed and if cited at all, it is partly due to the fact that in its content it is closely connected to letter 22. This letter – extended to an independent tract – is about female monasticism and it is also addressed to Eustochium. Connecting of the two letters is unambiguously suggested by this latter one, because Hieronymus himself calls our attention to the fact that he has previously written in this vein (*et pristini libelli etiam nunc recorderis*). The other reason is that this letter manifests the characteristically Jeromian way of thanking for presents just as in letter 44 written to Marcella. I think the interpretation of the letter is much more complex than its shortness (and its being neglected) would suggest and an accurate interpretation could – in several ways – bring a new shade to, or strengthen the picture about the of life St Jerome, about his oeuvre, and his relationships. In my essay I will touch upon a question which belongs not to the field of interest of a patrologist, but rather to that of the classical-philologist.

First of all it is worth counting all those places, which are obscure in the textual tradition, or which are interpreted differently by the various publishers. Right at the beginning in the first sentence, the plural of *epistulas* is uncertain, also remarked by Hilberg, because the singular form also appears in the tradition. In the tradition *qua-*

⁴ The text of the letter is quoted from the first text-critically sound edition: *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae. Pars I: Epistulae I–LXX*, recensuit Isidorus HILBERG. Vindobonae–Lipsiae 1910. 249–251. (From the more recent editions Jérôme LABOURT’S work is worth mentioning: *Saint Jérôme Lettres*. Tome II. Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme LABOURT. Paris 1951. 35–37. In the text of this letter his version only differs in punctuation from that of Hilberg.) The text-critically problematic places are underlined.

dam occurs in the second sentence, but arguments could be brought up for *quidam* (in the meaning of *quomodo*), too. Less problematic is the interpretation of the other words in the place of *festius*: the use of *festivius* (plural) does not change the meaning of the text, and even the repetition of *festus est* can be explained. In the same sentence – instead of *concinendus* accepted by Hilberg – the obviously incorrect *concinendos* and *concinendus* live on in the codices, but certain publishers accepted the accuracy of the reading *condiendus*. In the middle of the second caput in one of the codices *demittas* appears against the unanimously accepted *dimittas*. In the last caput the *Codex Turicensis Augiensis* bequeathes *donum* instead of *dona*, while in several manuscripts and with certain publishers the form *cerasis* appears instead of *cerasiis* of the Hilberg edition. Similarly *existimarem* appears next to *existimarim* in the text tradition. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether *quod* is better instead of *quo*, or *intra* instead of *contra*. In the part of the text quoted from the Bible some codices come up with *ecce* instead of *quae*, and even though it does not have any significance from the point of view of the text, it cannot be neglected. At the end of the letter, however, if perchance the word *subsequatur* stood instead of *sequatur*, the meaning would remain unchanged.

Based on the short review of the text variants, it seems that only three of them have some importance in the analysis of the letter: *epistulas-epistulam*; *concinendus-condiendus*, *donum-dona*. The fourth text variant, *cerasis-cerasiis* raises an entirely different type of problem that does not belong closely to the interpretation of the letter.

The letter was written in an everyday situation. The sixteen-year-old Eustochium sent presents (*armillas, epistulas?*, *columbas* and *canistrum cerasiis refertum*) to Hieronymus on the day of St. Peter, the Apostle who gives thanks in this letter. While explaining the symbolical-mystical meaning of the presents, Hieronymus urges Eustochium to persist in her chastity, the sanctity of life chosen by her and he calls her to run an ascetic life. The text is visibly understood likely by all the publishers and translators I have examined... The *Patrologia Latina* introduces the letter in the following words: *Quaedam munuscula sibi in natali S. Petri ab Eustochio missa mystica interpretatione trahit ad morum interpretationem*.⁵ Labourt on the other hand summarizes like this: *Celle-ci lui ayant envoyé quelques cadeaux pour la fête de saint Pierre, il la remercie et dégage le sens symbolique de ces présents*.⁶ On the web almost the entire correspondence of Hieronymus can be read in English. Letter 31 is preceded by the following lines: *Jerome writes to thank Eustochium for some presents sent to him by her on the festival of St. Peter. He also moralizes on the mystical meaning of the articles sent. The letter should be compared with letter XLIV of which the theme is similar. Written at Rome in 384 a.d. and they add in brackets: on St. Peter's Day*.⁷ The summary that can be found in the Spanish bilingual edition does not differ from those in the English and French translations: *Esta carta a Eustoquia es como un ligero divertimento en el que Jerónimo agradece unos regalos*

⁵ PL XXII,

⁶ LABOURT, 211.

⁷ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001031.htm>, and http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-03.htm#P75_1065. (15. 01. 2001)

*que le vienen de la joven discípula. Halagado por le este gesto de familiaridad, Jerónimo pretende disimular divagando sobre la posible interpretación espiritual de cada uno de los regalos. Año 384.*⁸

The consonance of the three résumés suggests that in connection with the letter 31 of Hieronymus all this can be viewed as the *communis opinio* of philological scholarship on Hieronymus, there is no problem worth mentioning concerning its analysis. However, if we compare the translations done in these three world languages, then the difference that occurs in the very first sentence makes us suspicious, suggests that not everything is so unambiguous about the interpretation of this letter. The first sentence in the Spanish edition goes like this: *Pequeños en apariencia, pero grandes por el afecto, son los regalos que he recibido de una virgen: brazaletes, cartas y palomas.*⁹ The English translation reads as follows: *Doves, bracelets, and a letter are outwardly but small gifts to receive from a virgin, but the action which has prompted them enhances their value*, while Labourt interprets the first sentence like this: *Petits d'apparence, mais grands par l'affection dont ils témoignent, sont les présents que j'ai reçus d'une vierge: bracelets, lettres et colombes.*¹⁰

The reason for the similarity of the Spanish and French translations is apparent; the Spanish translator is supposed to have worked on the textual edition and translation of Labourt, since the Latin text in the bilingual Spanish edition corresponds exactly to the Latin text of the Labourt edition. The interpretation of the English translator differs – not only in word order – from the two other translations, possibly because the text of *PL* lay in front of the translator. That is the reason why – in contrast with the other two translators – he translated *doves, bracelets, and a letter* – that is, according to him, Eustochium enclosed a letter to the presents. The two other translations keep the word order of the Latin text as well as the plural form of the three nouns: *bracelets, lettres et colombes* or *brazaletas, cartas y palomas*.

At first sight the difference between the English and the other two translations can be explained by the use of different text editions, in other words the text tradition in the listing of the presents is divided in two: *armillas, epistulas et columbas* and *armillas, epistulam et columbas*. The first to perceive this problem was the one who chose the reading *epistulam* instead of *epistulas*. His reasoning is absolutely logical, because it is totally inexplicable why Eustochium sent *more* letters as presents. Clearly the question rises immediately: Whose letters were these? Perhaps Eustochium wrote them? But then why did she send all of them to Hieronymus at once and why were they presents? Or did somebody else write them? Then why does not he – an otherwise very accurate father of the church – mention the name whose letters were sent to him by the young virgin? In one word the answer is that Eustochium sent one letter as a covering letter. Surely Petrus Caninius, the editor of the *Epistulae*-edition

⁸ *San Jerónimo, Epistolario*. Edición bilingüe I–II. edición preparada por Juan Bautista VALERO. (Biblioteca de autores cristianos) Madrid 1993–1995. 1, 295.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁰ LABOURT, 35–36. In his interpretation Jacques FONTAINE also follows Labourt. See *Letteratura Tardoantica. Figure e percorsi*. Traduzione di Chiara OMBRETTA. Brescia 1998. 214. n. 20. The letter is similarly understood by one of the best Hungarian experts of the history of ancient monasticism, Mária PUSKELY, too. See *Kétezer év szerzetessége I–II*. Budapest 1998. vol. I, 337.

that was the most accepted one for centuries, reasoned this way, too, who accepted the reading *epistulam* and summarized the letter in the following words: *Eustochium in die festo Petri Apostoli, qui XXIX. die Junii celebratur, munuscula quaedam inter quae cerasa erant, una cum epistula ad Hieronymum miserat; nunc is ei respondet, cunctaque ad institutionem bonorum morum pie, ac festiviter transfert.*¹¹

Apparently, the English translator found it strange, how the letter – which according to the editor of the Latin text could only be a covering letter for the presents – got in between the two presents (*armillas, columbas*). So the translator changed the order and as a result digressed from the Latin text.

The reading *epistulam* is undeniably easier to interpret, but it is illogical between the two plural forms: Hieronymus does not like such stylistic *varietas*.¹² All of his listings are characterised by numerical identity or precision. If he had really received a covering letter from Eustochium, then he would have taken care to state explicitly that the letter was put beside the presents as an accompanying one: *et epistulam*. This apparently means that the correct text version is *armillas, epistulas et columbas* handed down to us in the tradition. In other words Eustochium sent “bracelets, letters and doves” to his master and spiritual father. Besides these she had also sent – as he mentions in the second part of his letter – a basket full of cherries. But why did Eustochium send such presents on St Peter’s Day?

Giving presents was an ancient Roman custom and from the literary allusions one can assume that the Romans used every occasion to give presents to each other. Martialis devoted two volumes of epigrams to such presents. The short poems show well what could be given as presents: all sorts of food, beans, lentils, asparagus,¹³ but even doves,¹⁴ too. Then different types of papers, including letter-paper,¹⁵ and even if Martialis does not mention bracelets, if rings¹⁶ could be given, then possibly bracelets could be given as gifts, too. Giving presents was not restricted to pagan Romans, this custom lived among the Christians as well, as it turns out from other letters of St. Jerome.¹⁷ For example Marcella also pleased him with several presents: she sent him a chair (*sella*), a bag (*saccus*), cups (*calices*) and wax (*cereos*). Jerome could make good use of all these gifts as he verbalised it in his letter.¹⁸ The presents of Eustochium, however, are of a very different nature. Perhaps the ascetic priest might have eaten the basket of cherries, which could have been a treat for him who often ate only beans, and probably he could have made good use of letters or letter-papers, but what could he have done with doves or bracelets?

¹¹ *Divi Hieronymi Stridonensis Epistulae Selectae et in Libros tres distributae*. opera D. Petri CANISII. Venetiis 1775.78. A same interpretation: Stefan REBENICH, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis*. Stuttgart 1992. 168.

¹² See John Nicolas HRITZU: *The Style of the Letters of St. Jerome*. Washington D.C. 1939. 46sq.

¹³ Martialis, XIII, 7;9;21

¹⁴ Martialis, XIII, 66.

¹⁵ Martialis, XIV, 11.

¹⁶ Martialis, XIV, 122.

¹⁷ See for example the already quoted letter XLIV written to Marcella.

¹⁸ *Nobis autem, in peruersum licet, munera uestra conueniunt: sedere aptum est otiosis, in sacco iacere paenitentibus, calices habere potantibus, licet et propter nocturnos metus et animo semper malo conscientiae formidante cereos quoque accendisse sit gratum.* (ep. 44)

The latter was a favourite jewel of the Romans worn both by men and women, and it had various types, differentiated mainly by the material they were made of. Even one of the best-known legends was connected to these bracelets. Tarpeia, the daughter of the commander of a Roman fort was bribed by the Sabine Tatius to let his soldiers into the fort. The treacherous girl – as it can be read in one of the versions of Livy – was killed the way she was (the soldiers threw their arms on her), because she asked them to throw at her what they had been wearing on their left arms. While she meant their massive golden bracelets (*armillas*) and rings, the soldiers threw their shields held in their left hands.¹⁹ In Plautus's *Truculentus* the main character asks a woman whether she finds herself beautiful now that she had received bronze bracelets.²⁰ Pliny the Elder even writes about women who wore milk-teeth locked in the bracelets as a talisman against pains.²¹ What for could Hieronymus use not just one, but several bracelets like these? He, who always condemned most aggressively every manifestation of luxury and artificial beauty, he, who always raged against the jewels and beautifiers of women, he, who only deemed simple clothing and – *horribile dictu!* – unkempt appearance proper for women vowed to chastity, why does not he make any critical remarks to the bracelets? Why does not he recall the highly instructive story of Tarpeia if later in connection with the basket of cherries he entertains a long discourse upon the Italian naturalization of the fruit?

Is the situation the same with the doves, too? It is unquestionable that doves were not unknown in Rome, what's more according to the cook-book of Apicius it counted as a gourmandism on the Roman tables.²² But what could Hieronymus do with them? First of all, where could he put them? Did he set them free or did he make somebody cook them? Perhaps they arrived from Eustochium ready to be eaten? It is not unlikely since the main topic in the letter of Hieronymus is the importance of fasting. Hieronymus regarded the eating of exotic poultry to be one of the most vicious forms of luxury. So it is surprising why he does not object to the fact that a girl with a vow of chastity sends him either living or already prepared doves as presents on the anniversary of the martyrdom of St Peter? Why does he not say anything when in a letter written to Asella he naturalistically reproaches the addressee that he regurgitates hazel-grouse?²³

In European civilisation the rules of giving presents in the everyday communication of people have been more or less the same for the past few thousand years. In choosing the present the giver normally takes into consideration what preferences the person given the present has, what he likes, what he needs. Often uncertainty and prolonged hesitation precedes the selection of the proper present or surprise. Furthermore there are official and less official presents, and – it is almost a cliché – most of the people prefer simpler, less expensive and more personal, maybe hand-made presents to ones that are more difficult to return, that obliges the person to return it with

¹⁹ See Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, I, 11.

²⁰ Plautus, *Truculentus*, 269.

²¹ Plinius Maior, *Naturalis Historia*, 28.41.6: *pueri qui primus ceciderit dens, ut terram non attingat, inclusus in armillam et adsidue in brachio, habitus muliebrium locorum dolores prohibet.*

²² Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, 6, 4, 4.

²³ *Ep*, 64, 2.

a similarly generous gesture. A person feels uneasy if they receive a present with which he cannot do anything; it could even be offending if through oversight a person is given something totally alien from his personality. That is if we try to make sense of the presents Eustochium sent to Hieronymus from the point of view of content, we see that out of the four presents there are two, the bracelets and the doves, that are on the one hand alien and useless for the ascetic, learned priest, on the other hand they are definitely insulting. (Bögel, the author of the word-entry *armilla* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* lists its form appearing in the 31st letter to group I.a., i.e., the meaning of the word in his understanding is: *ornamentum mulierum, virorum effeminatorum, externorum, Sabinorum*.²⁴ Well, which of these would not be offending for St. Jerome?)

Furthermore there is no inner harmony between the gifts that is required of giving presents. If we look at Marcella's presents as a counter-example, we immediately see that all four objects (chair, sack, cups and wax) are such everyday (and not luxurious) things that suit Hieronymus's simple, encratic, and scholarly way of life, consequently he can make good use of them. Contrarily the four presents of Eustochium are of totally different type: a basket of fruit, some bracelets, letters or letter-papers, and finally some who-knows-what-they-are-good-for doves.

For Hieronymus these presents are absolutely inappropriate, and taking into consideration his steadily followed principles that appear in all his writings they could be offending; he could rightly be outraged by bracelets and doves. For that very reason it is strange and surprising that he answers amiably and warmly, in the voice of caring, nurturing love and does not refuse the presents, but expresses his thanks for them. From the fact that he is pleased by these presents, two things follow: either we have a completely false picture of Hieronymus or we misunderstand the letter. And since the first is highly unlikely we are left with the second assumption: the Hieronymus scholarship did not understand or misunderstood the letter. Let us then set the question again: what presents did Eustochium send to his holy spiritual father?

By the looks they are trivial little things (*parua specie*), but are full of love (*magna caritate*) – says Hieronymus about the presents at the beginning of the letter. This statement, however, can hardly be true for these things: the bracelets, even if they were not made of gold, only of bronze they could not be considered bagatelle. Furthermore, due to the empire's declining economic situation, neither the letter-paper nor the doves could be cheap, that is *parua specie*, even if a basket of cherries could easily be paid for. Consequently the presents mentioned at the beginning of the letter could hardly be what we thought of at first reading, rather we should think of small signs of the attention of Eustochium. But to the question what these *letters and doves* really were the answer is given in the entirety of the letter.

Seemingly the second sentence takes a sharp turn in its train of thought: since honey is not used in rituals consecrated to God (*mel in Dei officiis non offertur*), the much too sweet taste of honey has been changed by expertise (*nimia dulcedo arte mutata est*) because nothing is pleasing for God that brings pleasure (*uoluptuosum*),

²⁴ ThLL vol. II. fasc. III. 615.

nothing that is purely sweet (*suaue*), nothing that does not contain something from the bitter truth (*mordacis aliquid veritatis*) after all Christ's azyme is consumed with bitterness (*Pascha Christi cum amaritudinibus manducatur*). Then in the second caput he calls to himself warningly that his jocular discourse should not break away from the corner-stone-like Scriptures (*ut scripturarum cardinem iocularis sermo non fugiat*) and through analysing the mystical-symbolic meaning of the three presents he cautions Eustochium to keep to the ideal of her life. Then as a summary he mentions that the presents of the young virgin induced him to all this, for until sweet and bitter are mates (*dum dulcibus amara sociata sunt*) she would receive such letters, because praising is followed by bitterness (*laudem amaritudo comitabitur*).

In the final part of the letter Hieronymus mentions the fourth present, a basket of erubescient cherries with pure downiness, which he also interprets allegorically after a lengthy cultural-historical detour. He brings up Lucullus who naturalized the cherry and whose name has become inseparable from luxurious eating through the centuries. Then summing up he persuades her to celebrate the anniversary not so much with an abundant meal (*ciborum abundantia*) but with a jubilant spirit (*spiritus exultatione*), because it is absurd to celebrate with immoderate gorging (*nimia saturitate*) the martyr apostle, who pleased God mainly with fasting (*quem...Deo placuisse ieiuniis*). Consequently Eustochium should eat so (*tibi semper comedendum est*) that every meal should be followed by prayer (*oratio*) and a sacramental reading (*lectio*), because she will thus be the handmaid of the Lord.

The short abstract of the letter more or less shows that from the second sentence on through what associations built on similarities and oppositions he arrives at the formation of his final statement and what the *Leitmotiv* of the letter is:

mel-piper, on the level of notions: *dulcedo-amaritudo*; and *uoluptuosum*, *suaue* – *mordacis aliquid veritatis*, then *ciborum abundantia* – *spiritus exultatione*, *nimia saturitate* – *ieiuniis*, *cibum* – *oratio et lectio*. In other words the letter is structured on the dichotomy of honey and pepper, sweet and bitter, eating in general, excessive repletion and fasting. But what is the connection between these and the presents of Eustochium? The cherry – as a sort of delicacy that might be eaten on such an anniversary – can easily be fitted into this train of thought but the same can hardly be said of the bracelets, letters and doves. Or can they be fitted?

At the beginning of his cook-book Apicius describes two spicy wines (*conditum*) in which honey and pepper occur together as spices complementing each other. In the *conditum paradoxum* honey must be stirred to the wine and it must be heated several times, then pepper and other ingredients such as saffron are added to this mixture.²⁵ The *conditum melizomum viatorium* is specially made for travellers, in

²⁵ Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, 1,1,1: *CONDITVM PARADOXVM: Condi paradoxo compositio: mellis pondo XV in aeneum vas mittuntur, praemissis vini sextariis duobus, ut in coctura mellis vinum decoquas. quod igni lento et aridis lignis calefactum, commotum ferula dum coquitur, si effervere coeperit, vini rore compescitur, praeter quod subtracto igni in se redit. cum perfrixerit, rursus accenditur. hoc secundo ac tertio fiet, ac tum demum remotum a foco post pridie despumatur. tum <mittes> piperis uncias IV iam triti, mastice scripulos III, folii et croci dragmae singulae, dactylorum ossibus torridis quinque, isdemque dactilis vino mollitis, intercedente prius suffusione vini de suo modo ac numero, ut*

which the ingredients are also honey, pepper and wine.²⁶ Besides these several other recipes can be found in *De re coquinaria* where pepper and honey – with other ingredients – appear together. All this proves that Hieronymus's association is not merely allegoric but rather realistic. Even if it does not rest on direct culinary experience, it surely is based on the gastronomical knowledge Hieronymus disposed of. The fact that he had gastronomical knowledge is shown by his acrimonious phrases referring to eating and debauchery.

The two facts that the Roman cuisine affirmably used pepper to temper the sometimes cloyingly sweet taste of honey and that the letter of Hieronymus deals mainly with eating, plus that logical assumption that the second part of the letter follows organically the introductory sentence about the presents make us think that the solution of the riddle of *armillae*, *epistulae*, and *columbae* should be looked for in the field of eating. The presents of Eustochium are such things *in which the taste of honey and pepper can be found together, they fit the occasion, they are trifles but reveal great love, they seem quite luxurious to the ascetic Hieronymus taking only very simple nourishment and for a certain reason they can be called bracelets, letters and doves.*

Only one type of food meets all these requirements: on St. Peter's heavenly birthday Eustochium presented her master with some (probably home-made) biscuits: bracelet-, letter-, and dove-shaped gingerbread. If we interpret this way the presents listed at the beginning of the letter, we find an explanation to all the strangeness and inconsistency of the text.

In Hungary at more important festivals – especially at Christmas time – gingerbread biscuits of various shapes (ranging from stars to little houses) play an essential part in the celebration. In the country fairs adorned heart-, or hussar-shaped cookies are typical fairings. To see how the shape of the cake influences the name of a cake, we only need to think of some typical Hungarian bakery goodies: '*mákospatkó*' is a horseshoe shaped dough with poppy-seeds (*mákos* = poppy; *patkó* = horseshoe), '*fahéjas csiga*' (*fahéj* = cinnamon; *csiga* = snail) is similar to cinnamon rolls, but based on its shape Hungarians call it 'cinnamon-snail', '*ízeslevél*' (*ízes* = with jam; *levél* = letter) is a triangular croissant with jam inside as if a letter was folded hiding the contents. It is true that the antecedent clauses suggest that one is talking about a cake, but in the case of '*fatörzs*' (meaning tree-trunk, the name of a delicious cake) only the most sweet-toothed man would think of a sweet. Those small presents that Eustochium sent out of affection were biscuits with honey and pepper. Some were round – reminding us of *armilla*, some (maybe) scrolled – looking like *epistula*, and some were *columba*-shaped. It is understandable that these goodies – hardly compatible with the ascetic life-style – make Jerome think of fasting and abstemious meals, the taste of the cakes reminds him of the opposition between sweet and bitter. Such

tritura lenis habeatur. his omnibus paratis supermittis vini lenis sextaria XVIII. carbones perfecto aderunt [duo milia].

²⁶ Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, 1,1,1: *CONDITVM MELIZOMVM VIATORIVM: Condi tum melizomum perpetuum, quod subministratur per viam peregrinanti: piper tritum cum melle despumato in cupellam mittis conditi loco, et ad momentum quantum sit bibendum, tantum aut mellis proferas aut vinum misceas sed, si vas erit, nonnihil vini melizomo mittas, adiciendum propter mellis exitum solutiorem.*

presents are appropriate for Eustochium as well as for Hieronymus and the occasion, too, moreover the basket of delicious cherries is an excellent follow-up to the sweets.

This explains the friendly and affectionate tone that emanates from the letter. Hieronymus almost hears Eustochium's answer to the symbolic-mystical explanations: *you are much too serious and it does not become the celebration (nimium austere, et quod festo non conueniat diei)*! But Hieronymus is joking in his way: he writes about these cakes as if he received real bracelets, real letters and real doves. He quotes such places from the Scriptures where a real bracelet, a real letter and a real dove are mentioned. He cites God's gesture from the Apocalypse of St. John – the only place in the Scriptures where God takes something in his mouth: *tepidos in Apocalypsi euomere uelle se loquitur*. Furthermore he mixes the flavours into the letter that remind us of the flavours of Eustochium's presents: beside the sweetness of thanks the acidity of warning can also be felt: *ut te aliquid et piperis mordeat*.

(I only mention in brackets that the three presents mentioned at the beginning of the letter – if taken literally – can have an interpretation that can hardly be reconciled with the relationship between Eustochium and Hieronymus. An *armilla* – a jewel worn on the upper arm both by men and women and often thought of as having magic power – could be a present of engagement, a pledge of love, similarly to the letter and the dove.²⁷ It is a different matter whether Hieronymus was fully aware of the generally accepted connotation of these objects in the pagan world and literature when he compared the biscuits he had received to these objects. Partly yes, because based on his pagan literary knowledge he must have known that the dove was for example Venus's sacred bird. Or maybe it was not by chance that these biscuit forms – giving way to a fairly large range of associations – reminded him of exactly these objects? Or did Eustochium know precisely well what the cakes would remind his master of?)²⁸

Besides the text-critical consequences, this train of thought and interpretation developed above (since it radically changes the meaning of the letter) enriches with new features the image we had about the relationship of Hieronymus and Eustochium.

A) TEXT-CRITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTERPRETATION

If – as we have shown – the letter talks about three differently shaped pieces of gingerbread, then the reading *epistulam* in the first sentence is unmaintainable; this correction can only be the result of the fact that the correct *epistulas* in its literal meaning seemed illogical.

²⁷ About the dove as a present of engagement in Greek literature see Elvira PATAKI: *The master, the student and the syrinx*. *AntTan* 43 (1999) 101–114. Especially 112–113.

²⁸ Peter PÁZMÁNY, one of the most influential Hungarian theologians of the XVIIth c. in one place quotes the accusation of some Protestant theologians against St. Jerome according to which he had an affection for Eustochium. *Hieronymus az eo szeretőie Eustochium azzoni kedueert, megh dühült haraggal ir Vigilantius ellen*. (Hieronymus writes with anger against Vigilantius because of his lover Eustochium.) In: *Az mostan támadt uy tudomaniok hamissaganak TIIZ NILVANVALO BIZONISAGA*. Graecii Styriae 1605. 36r. Compare also with REBENICH, 9sqq. Maybe the wrong interpretation of this letter played a role in the development of Protestant criticism.

Based on this interpretation the reading *concinendus* in the first sentence of the second caput is also rejectable, which shows that copiers and editors had a chanted toasting of the celebrated martyr-apostle in mind. However, as we have seen, the motif of eating and tastes is carried through the entire letter, so I find the reading *condiendus* (otherwise viewed as *lectio difficilior*) more acceptable. It is supported by the fact that the passive perfect form of the verb has already appeared in the first caput (*piperis austeritate condita*).²⁹ This way the meaning of the sentence is the following: the (heavenly) birthday of the blessed Peter should be relished more convivially (more joyously) than usual.

In the same sentence *festiuius* from the textual tradition appears next to *festius* handed down in most codices. It is difficult to decide which reading suits the context of the letter better. Perhaps the generally bequeathed version is more probable as in its sounding it stands closer to the sentence opening *festus est*.

The fourth, text-critically problematic reading that can be connected to the above-mentioned interpretation is *dona* or *donum* appearing at the beginning of the third caput. The meaning of the text is not greatly modified by either of the versions, but still there is some difference between them. While *donum* suggests the homogeneity of the presents and thus confirms my interpretation, *dona* on the other hand shows that scribes and editors understood the presents listed at the beginning of the letter as separate pieces of presents. Nevertheless it is not likely that my interpretation exists in the tradition, rather it refers to the unity of the presents. Still it makes one wonder that the more classical reading *quidam* only appears in this textual tradition.

The rest of the text-critical problems cannot be solved based on the above-mentioned interpretation.

B) ALLEGORIC-SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE PRESENTS

As I have mentioned, Hieronymus interprets the variously shaped cakes and the basket of cherries he received as gifts by calling certain passages of the Bible for help. He turns their meaning, their message back to the presenter, to the person of Eustochium. Out of the two types of presents he makes four which is a clever editorial technique.³⁰ Besides it makes it possible for Jerome to separate those presents that he compares with other biblical objects based on their shapes from the present where he has to change the content – he has to change the cherries to figs in order to be able to allude to a biblical place.

In connection with “bracelets” he quotes the passage from the Book of Ezekiel, where the Lord describes how he had adorned the womanly representation of Jerusalem (Ez 16, 1–14). Jerome picks out the part where the Lord enumerates the jewels

²⁹ Petrus CANISIUS also accepted this reading!

³⁰ About Jerome's method with numbers see: Filippo CAPPONI: Aspetti realistici e simbolici dell'epistolario di Gerolamo. In: *Gerolamo e la biografia letteraria*. D.A.R.F.I.C.L.E.T. Genova 1989. 94–99.

given by him: *et dedi armillas in manibus tuis*. In his annotation to the Book of Ezekiel Hieronymus interprets *armilla* likewise: *quando nobis bona opera dederit deus, circumdat armillas manibus nostris*. In his interpretation through this God gives protection to Jerusalem, because – as he continues – in the Book of Job it is an *armilla* that pierces the mouth of a snake, in other words the mouths of masters teaching false doctrines: *in Iob quoque draconis labium perforatur armilla, omnesque eius venenati sibili, qui in perversis intelleguntur dogmatibus, bonorum operum circulo perforantur*.³¹ In the letter of thanks to Eustochium he warns the young virgin to be prudent not to lose the *operis ornamenta* which *verae armillae sunt brachiorum*, i.e., they are the real bracelets of the arms. The word *opus* (*bona opera, bonorum operum circulo, operis ornamenta*) appears both in the commentary of Ezekiel and in the letter, but does the word mean the same in both texts? Highly likely because what adorn the arm in Ezekiel are good deeds, the good deeds that save us from evil, too. Surely Hieronymus prompts Eustochium to do these deeds, since such bracelets were donated for example to soldiers as tokens of honour. Furthermore the expression *bona opera* occurs twice in the corpus of Hieronymian letters, in both cases with the meaning of ‘good deeds’.³² He probably took this interpretation from Origenes who also understands this part of the Book of Ezekiel in the same way.³³

The second biblical example cited by Jerome can be found both in the Book of Baruch and that of Jeremiah³⁴, since Jeremiah dictated the letter to Baruch, sent the letter with Baruch to King Joachim. The king had one of his servants read the letter, but after a part had been read the king had that part of the letter cut off and thrown into the fire. Similarly to the heathen king through this example, in a rather startling metaphor Jerome warns the young novice Eustochium not to tear the letter of her bosom (*ne epistulam pectoris tui scindas*).³⁵

In the third example – though beforehand Jerome mentioned that the Holy Spirit has abated in the form of a dove (*in columbae specie spiritus sanctus adlabitur*) – after all he cites Hosea’s words addressed to Ephraim. Slightly changing the wording he uses it to caution Eustochium: you became foolish like a dove (*facta es insipiens ut columba*).³⁶ The deviation from the original can perhaps be explained because from the original Jerome could not work up a warning that could have been applicable to the young maiden. So he had to deviate from the parallel in the New Testament and instead he had to insert to the text Ozeas’s simile referring to foolishness, simple-mindedness, folly. However, there is a slight difference between the quote in the letter and the biblical quote found in Jerome’s commentary to the

³¹ *Commentarii in Ezechielem*, 4:16.

³² See *Epist.* 69,2 and 130,5.

³³ *Homilia*, 6,10: *Cum mihi dederit occasiones bonorum actuum, armillas circumdat manibus meis*. Origene, *Homélies sur Ézéchiel*. Texte latin, introduction, traduction et notes. par Marcel BORRET S.J. (Sch N° 352) Paris 1989.

³⁴ Bar 6, and Jer 36.

³⁵ Unfortunately with the interpretation of this passage we cannot turn for help to the Jeronian commentary, because the explanations to this part of the Book of Jeremiah have not been written.

³⁶ Hos 7:11.

Book of the Prophet Ozeas. In the latter the text goes like this: *Et factus est Ephraim quasi columba seducta non habens cor*.³⁷ Referring to Christ's words in the Evangelists (Mt 10) when interpreting this part of the text Hieronymus elucidates the following: *simplicitas absque ratione* equals *stultitia*.³⁸ In what follows Hieronymus quotes the translations of Aquila, of Symmachus and of the Septuaginta, and translating *seducta* he interprets it as *insipiens*, in other words he understands the text as referring to Ephraim's witless mind (*intantum brutae mentis*).

However, he raises the question why does the prophet draw a comparison between Ephraim and a dove. In his opinion while all the other birds protect their young even at the expense of their lives it is only the dove which does not care if its young are taken away, only the dove does not miss them (*sola columba ablatis pullos non dolet, non requirit*). This interpretation has no message for Eustochium since there is no parallel between the king and the young virgin with regards to protecting others. Eustochium does not have such a task, she is not in charge of others. Rather we could understand the lastly mentioned argument to be relevant to Eustochium in which Hieronymus explains that heretic masters leaving the Church (*magistros contrarium dogmatum*) can be considered as insipid and heartless doves (*insipientem et ex-cordem columbam*). Thus the parallel can be a warning for the virgin to persist in the teachings of the Church.

Why Jerome did not use the expression *seducta* as the attribute of dove can be explained by two things. Jerome *a priori* interpreted the sentence for Eustochium – applying it not to the heart but to the intellect in order to make it clear for the addressee what he had had in mind – to make his previous warning stronger. On the other hand it is not unlikely that at that time he knew the text in this form since he wrote the commentary on the Book Hosea twenty years after this event in Rome.

Thus the three admonishing exhortations refer to the following: Eustochium should take care of the ornament of her deeds (*operis ornamenta*), of the feelings of her heart (*pectoris epistulam*) and of her thoughts (*facta es insipiens*). Besides showing gradation from deeds to thoughts, these three areas mean unity according to certain pagan schools of philosophy: starting from the active part of the soul through the emotional, feeling part of the soul until the thinking part of the soul – this refers to the unity of the soul.

In interpreting the other present, the basket of cherries, Hieronymus remains in the field of the Old Testament. After having replaced cherries by figs – as cherries do not figure in the Bible – he again quotes Jeremiah where God says *the good figs, very good*.³⁹ Fortunately the erudite Church Father had reached so far in the commentary of the prophetic oeuvre, so we know how he interpreted this excerpt.

Similarly to the quote from Hosea the translation in the commentary slightly differs from the one quoted in the letter: *ecce duo calathi (sive cophini)*⁴⁰ *pleni ficis*,

³⁷ Comm. in. Hos 2:7.

³⁸ About the meaning of the Jeronian *simplicitas* see ANTIN, 147–161.

³⁹ Jer 24:3.

⁴⁰ Based on the translation of Symmachus.

positi ante Templum Domini... After having lengthily cited the Scriptures he lists how others interpreted it: the two baskets of figs mean the Old and the New Testaments, The Laws and the Gospels (*in Lege et in Evangelio*), the synagogue and the Church (*Synagoga et Ecclesia*), i.e., the Jews and the Christians, finally they express the opposition of damnation and heaven (*gehenna et regno caelorum*). Referring to Paul the Apostle⁴¹, he rejects this interpretation. He rather understands in this picture those people, who, at the coming of the Saviour, believed or did not believe in him. The latter were the bad figs fanaticised by the priests to demand the crucifixion of Christ.

But Hieronymus discards the allegoric interpretation of this part; he tries to explain the symbol of the two figs from the point of view of historical truth (*simpli-cem autem et veram sequamur historiam*). According to this the good are those who – fulfilling the wish of the Lord – gave themselves up to the king of Babylon, that is Joachim and his family; and the bad are those who resisted his will, that is Zedekiah and his followers. And the Lord took such care of those who rested in his will that he led them back to his own soil (*et reduxit illos in terram suam*). Jerome stresses the fact that Joachim did not go to captivity but emigrated because he went on his own will. Then the interpretation takes a little detour, because Jerome compares the text of the Septuagint with the original Hebrew text, but the comparison only pertains to the artisans and goldsmiths present in the escort of king Joachim.

In the next train of thought the good, the very good, that is early figs pertain already to the Patriarchs, to Moses, Aaron and Job and that is the reason why Christians are called the sons of Abraham: *unde et nos appellamur filii Abraham*. The placing of the baskets also had its significance. Not outside the Church but in front of the Lord's Temple (*non erant foris et extra Ecclesiam, sed ante templum Domini*), so that all his wisdom could be revealed. The discussion that follows digresses greatly from the original historical events because Jerome continues by saying that the figs outside are not as bitter as those which changed after – having confessed their faith – refusing to do their duties (*quae post confessionem fidei praevaricatione mutatae sunt*). Nevertheless, those figs that are not located in the “field of view” of God's church are not so sweet either. These are the heathen philosophers, who rather praised than followed virtues. Those in God's church, e.g., prophets or apostles, are much sweeter than these philosophers. The whole meditation boils down to the claim that those people are better who are close to the Church, or to God's church. *Ac ne putemur nostrum sensum ponere, ipsa Scriptura se pandit* – goes on Jerome, and quotes the self-interpretative Scriptural text, according to which Joachim and those with him in the captivity in Babylon are the good figs who act in harmony with God's will, as not only our deeds, but our will also depends on the grace of God (*quod non solum opera, sed et voluntas nostra Dei nitatur auxilio*). Finally, once again, he refuses the possibility of the allegorical interpretation, which assaults the historical truth, for he associates the good figs with those who were dragged to the lands of the Caldeans from the celestial Jerusalem, i.e., with Jeremiah and the

⁴¹ Refers to the Letter to the Romans, ch.7.

other prophets, while the rest, the sinners would die in this land and in the valley of tears.⁴²

Even though it is evident that Hieronymus, when interpreting this vision, refuses the allegorical interpretation – he points this out clearly – and comments on the entire vision as a unified, self-interpretative whole, yet he cannot really avoid allegorical connotations, since in the introduction to Book V he claims that one of the baskets represents the sweetness of faith, while the other one the bitterness of the heretic breach of faith (*quorum alter rectae fidei dulcedinem, alter haereticorum perfidiae amaritudinem*). But what did he want to draw Eustochium's attention to with quoting the line referring to the good figs, what kind of request and petition was hidden in it?

As Hieronymus started to write his commentaries on the books of Jeremiah in 415, more than thirty years later than this late June event in Rome, it is questionable whether he held the same view on the two baskets of figs. It is already striking that while in the text of the Vulgate the word *calathus* (or *cophinus*) is used, in the epistle written to Eustochium Hieronymus uses *canistrum*. Furthermore the letter reads *contra templi dei*, or in certain codices *intra templum dei*, while the text of the commentary reads *ante templum Domini*, or as Jerome puts it in the interpretation: "*in conspectu templi dei*." Moreover, he writes in the letter that he quotes the words of God, while in the text of the Vulgate it is Jeremiah who responds to God's questions with these words, as in the former it is in the nominative, while in the latter it is in the accusative.⁴³ The differences between the two texts are revealing, and they prove that at the time of writing letter 31 Hieronymus knew the passage from Jeremiah in a different form than when later he was commenting on it. Because it is hardly dubitable that he knew it as at the end of the 70's, maybe in Antioch, he translated Origen's homilies written to the book of Jeremiah.

It is well-known that Jerome changed his views radically about Origen's theology, how he turned against it. When writing the letter to Eustochium, however, Hieronymus was still influenced by the theology of the Greek Church Father. Even though he radically wrote three decades later – maybe referring to his old model – that *delirat allegoricus interpret* the quotation in the letter must be in the vein of Origen⁴⁴. It cannot be interpreted as a hint to make Eustochium start the long journey, and move to the Holy Land, because Pope Damasus dies only at the end of the year, in other words, Hieronymus as one of the possible candidates for becoming the bishop of Rome, could hardly intend to take a ship and leave Rome.

Jerome thus tells Eustochium with this quotation to stay on the side of true faith, to be a good Christian, i.e., with only one quotation he grasps the three fields

⁴² Comm. in Jer 24: *Delirat in hoc loco allegoricus semper interpret, et vim cupiens historicae facere veritati, de coelesti Jerusalem captos refert atque translato in terram Chaldaeorum: rursumque ad locum pristinum reversuros, ut Jeremiam et ceteros sanctos prophetas: alios vero qui peccatores fuerint, in terra hac et in valle lacrimarum esse morituros.*

⁴³ The tradition of the manuscripts knows about other textual variants: instead of *quae* one finds *ecce* and *quia*.

⁴⁴ No remark by Origenes has come down to us interpreting the two baskets of figs, the "vein of Origen," thus, does not mean more than "in the spirit of Origen."

that he touched upon with the Scriptural *loci* associated with the gingerbread. This is also confirmed by the reference to the Book of Revelations, which also incites to true Christianity – protecting from damnation. Jerome does not warn or incite Eustochium with this simile, but rather expresses his wish that Eustochium be one of the good figs in front of the church: *praedicamus optamusque te de illis pomis fieri, quae contra templum dei sunt [...]*. And this wish does not appeal to an aspect of Eustochium's character, but to the whole personality of the young girl sending gifts, and this way the allegorical interpretation of the separated gifts forms a contrast and unity, which, in turn, is a nice example of Hieronymus's excellent technique of composition.

C) THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM OF CERASIIS-CERASIS, CERASIA-CERASA

Finally, in the second half of the letter, Jerome mentions that he was also given a basket of cherries as a gift, and that the cherries are so red as if they had been brought by Lucullus at the moment (*ut ea nunc a Lucullo delata existimarim*). Then he explains that Lucullus was the first after the conquest of the Pontus and Armenia to naturalise this species in Rome, or in Italy, and that it was named after the town of Cerasus (*siquidem hoc genus pomi Ponto et Armenia subiugatis de Cerasunto primus Romam pertulit unde et e patria arbor nomen accepit*). With this excursion in cultural history, Jerome explains why this fruit does not appear in the Bible, and why he has to refer to figs, so as to continue the allegorical-symbolic interpretation which he started with the biscuits received as gifts.

It is undeniable that the source for the historical excursion could be a heathen author. Though *PL* lists several places claiming that it was Lucullus who naturalised cherry on the peninsula, yet Pliny is usually named as the source, who writes in Book XV of *Naturalis Historia*: *Cerasi ante victoriam Mithridaticam L. Luculli non fuere in Italia, ad urbis annum DCLXXX. is primum <in>vexit e Ponto, annisque CXX trans oceanum in Britanniam usque pervenere; eadem [ut diximus] in Aegypto nulla cura potuere gigni*. Hagendahl⁴⁵ quotes Pliny the Elder several times with respect to certain places in Hieronymus, but in two cases he expresses his doubt whether the *Naturalis Historia* was the source, and only the remarks in relation to the jewels in Jerome testify that he knew the work mentioned above.⁴⁶ Though textual editors thought that Jerome's source must have been Pliny, yet it is strange that they preferred *cerasiis* instead of *cerasis*, even though the latter was stronger in the textual convention, especially as Pliny used the latter one as well. One should not disregard Hagendahl's doubt, and it is worth the investigation whether there is another source that is more feasible in the case of Hieronymus.

⁴⁵ Harald HAGENDAHL: *The Latin Fathers and the Classics. A study on the apologists, Jerome and other Christian writers*. Göteborg 1958. 103, 217.

⁴⁶ HAGENDAHL, 232, 237.

To Servius' comment on the line in Virgil's *Georgica* claiming that there are certain types of trees that multiply from their root (*pullulat ab radice aliis densissima silua, / ut cerasis ulmisque*; (2,17–18)), he adds the following comments: '*haec cerasus, his cerasis*' *facit. sane Cerasus civitas est Ponti, quam cum delesset Lucullus, genus hoc pomi inde advexit et a civitate cerasium appellavit: nam arbor cerasus, pomum cerasium dicitur. hoc autem etiam ante Lucullum erat in Italia, sed durum, et cornum appellabatur: quod postea mixto nomine cornocerasium dictum est* (ad v. 2,18). That is, he defines the declension of the word "cherry-tree" (*cerasus*), while he does not forget about its form of plural dative-ablative, and tells, as Jerome does, that Lucullus naturalised the cherry in Italy. Servius adds as well that the declensions of *cerasium* denoting the fruit, and of *cerasus* signifying the tree are different.

The *Scholia Bernensia*⁴⁷ from the late antiquity relate almost the same as Servius: *Cerasis. Cerasus ciuitas Ponti. Arbor 'cerasus,' pomum autem 'cerasum' dicitur. [...] Cerasis. Lucullus capto Ceraso oppido primus in Italiam attulit.* (ad v. 2,18).

If the information related in the Scholion and in Servius is compared to the same in Hieronymus's letter, then one finds only one piece of information that cannot be found in the commentary on Virgil. The only difference is the remark that Lucullus conquered not only Pontus but Armenia as well (*et Armenia subiugatis*).

Jerome favoured Virgil the most among the antique pagan authors, he quotes him every now and then, and he gained the dislike of his opponents because he made the younger monks in the monastery read Virgil. Hieronymus learned this respect and devotion towards the poet from his professor in Rome, Aelius Donatus, who wrote commentaries – that have, unfortunately, been lost – on Terence and on Virgil as well. It is evident that another disciple of Donatus, Servius, who prepared the most thoroughgoing commentary on Virgil's *Georgica* used his master's work substantially, i.e., a large part of Servius' explanations derive from him and from the vast secondary literature on Virgil. In this very case, there are two conclusions that may follow from that fact that Servius, who is extremely critical with the explanations of his predecessors, does not say that previous commentators thought otherwise. Either Servius was the first who commented on this line in this way – and this is very unlikely – or all the rest of the commentators agreed on this explanation. If the latter is true, this account or something similar could have been found in Aelius Donatus' commentary on Virgil, which means that Jerome read and probably even had to learn this explanation. It seems feasible then that Jerome, being the disciple of Donatus, made a distinction between the cherry-tree (*cerasus*) and its fruit (*cerasium*) in terms of their respective declensions, i.e., he certainly said *cerasia* to the latter in the plural nominative and accusative, and *cerasiis* in the plural dative and ablative. Thus, Labourt and Valero following him are not inconsequent when mixing the two different paradigms, and accept once *cerasiis refertum* and later *cerasa*, even though that Eustochium must have sent cherries and not a cherry-tree to her master who was educated in the school of Donatus.

⁴⁷ *Scholia Bernensia ad Vergili Bucolica atque Georgica*. Edidit emendavit praefatus est Hermannus HAGEN. Leipzig 1867 (rep. Hildesheim 1967).

In conclusion, one may well claim that the short letter addressed to Eustochium is not only the document of the intimate relationship between master and disciple, but also a characteristic and – in its brevity – genuine work representing Jerome's art of writing and way of thinking as well.

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