

Exercise 8.2

Jerome was unique in his linguistic breadth encompassing Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac and this fitted him for the task of the creation of the Vulgate, which remained for the Roman Church the word of God for over a thousand years.

His early privileged life allowed a love of classical Latin that lasted his whole life. His battles with his personal demons prompted the learning of Hebrew to quell his overactive imagination. (John Romer, *Testament*, London:Michael O'Mara Books, p237) Scandal and his ability to give offence appears to have led to his leaving Rome on more than one occasion and hence his explorations of monasticism, and later in life to have given him time to complete his translations banished from Rome. These journeys put him in touch with the communities that originated the documents upon which he lavished his learning. He is also part of the popularisation of asceticism in the lives of the monastic saints he created. He was the portal for transmission of much of the Greek heritage of the Church into Latin such as Origen and Eusebius. His insistence on the need for a guide to the scriptures presages the suppression of individual interpretation up to the Reformation.

His privileging of virginity along with his obvious love of women suggest struggling with woman as temptation¹ and his need for women to make themselves acceptable to him. He therefore bears his part of the burden of the whore – virgin label placed on woman since. Warner (*Alone of All Her Sex*, London: Picador, 1976,

¹ Jerome describes his privations as a hermit but notes that “I often found myself surrounded by bands of dancing girls.” in Romer, p 237.

p75) points out that his exhortations to fasting in the young woman unlucky enough to come under his influence and would have caused amenorrhoea and cured them of the curse, “nothing is so unclean as a woman in her periods.”

(Jerome in Warner, p76)