

# Rhetorical strategies in Jerome's polemical works

MAIJASTINA KAHLOS

Rogo, quid a nobis libere dictum est [...]
   
num quem amarior sermo pulsavit?

I ask what I have said with excessive freedom [...]
   
Have I assailed anyone in bitter terms?

Hieronymus, Epistulae 27.2

## 1. Jerome in pamphlet warfare

Jerome of Stridon (346–420) was notorious for his vitriolic wit, polemic and satire already in his own time. His contemporaries both appreciated and reproached him as a skilful polemicist. Jerome was himself aware of his inclination to be drawn into ceaseless controversies.<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars have portrayed him as “irascible to the point of morbidity” and described “his inherently irascible and intolerant personality” and his pleasure in insulting others.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Jerome's contemporaries were Sulpicius Severus (dialogi 1.21: *verum haec describenda mordacius beato Hieronymo relinquamus*) and Palladius (historia Lausiaca 36.6 on Jerome's malevolence). Jerome (Epistulae 45.2) tells us how in Rome people regarded him as an infamous and slippery turncoat, a liar and a deceiver using Satanic arts (*Ego probrosus, ego versipellis et lubricus, ego mendax et Satanae arte decipiens*). For general introductions of Jerome's life, see Kelly, Jerome, and Rebenich, Jerome.
  - 2 Kelly, Jerome, 55: “He was also Jerome – self-willed and sharp-tongued, irascible to the point of morbidity”; also 25: “We may suspect, however, that, not for the last time, his passionate temperament, his tactlessness, or his uncontrollable tongue, or some combination of these, had landed him in some major imprudence, some disastrous indiscretion”; also 110: “Self-knowledge and self-criticism seem to have been almost completely lacking to him”. Wiesen, St. Jerome as a Satirist, 197: “his inherently irascible and intolerant personality”; also 11: “Jerome's proud and irascible nature”; also 187: “satire degenerates into choleric malevolence”. Grützmacher, Hieronymus I, 14; I, 156: “er hatte geradezu Freude daran, andere zu verletzen”; also Grützmacher, Hieronymus II, 210: “Hieronymus kennt die Menschen zwar nur von einer Seite, nämlich von der schlechten”.

The present article examines the rhetorical strategies in Jerome's polemical writings, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* (in 378/379), *Adversus Helvidium* (in 383), *Adversus Iovinianum* (in 393), *Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* (in 395/396), *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* (in 401), *Contra Vigilantium* (in 406) and *Dialogi adversus Pelagianos* (in 415). His letters and exegetical works are used as comparative material.<sup>3</sup> The most vehement invectives rise in the situations of contention with Jovinian, Vigilantius and Rufinus. In these controversies between Jerome and his competitors, theological issues and personal aversions, clerical ambitions and rivalry for spiritual leadership were inseparably intertwined. It is noteworthy that Jerome and his opponents competed with each other for attention and financial resources within the same Christian aristocratic circles.<sup>4</sup>

Jerome's polemic and satire have been meticulously analysed by Ilona Opelt and David Wiesen. Opelt has carried out a structural analysis of Jerome's seven polemical works and scrutinized the elements of his argumentation (such as *exordia*, questions, anaphors, antitheses and irony), whereas Wiesen has introduced Jerome's satire as targeting specific groups. Furthermore, Benedetto Clausi has examined Jerome's use of

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3 The overviews of the polemical works: *Dialogus contra Luciferianos*: Canellis, Saint Jérôme et les Ariens, 155–194, Canellis, Jérôme. Débat entre un Luciférien et un orthodoxe, 28–54; Kelly, Jerome, 62–64; *Adversus Helvidium* (in 383): Milazzo, L'utilizzazione della scrittura nell'“Adversus Helvidium” di Gerolamo, 21–24, Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 188–192, Hunter, Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginité in Late Fourth-Century Rome, 47–50, Kelly, Jerome, 105–109; *Adversus Iovinianum* (in 393): Hunter, Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy; Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 24–30, 230–234, Duval, L'affaire Jovinien, 97–111, Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 130–132; *Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* (between 395–399): de Vogüé, Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité, 16–48, Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 132–137, Kelly, Jerome, 206–209; *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* (in 401–402 or 402–403): Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 137–148, de Vogüé, Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité, 69–77, Kelly, Jerome, 232–258; *Contra Vigilantium* (in 406): Hunter, Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen, 401–410, Kelly, Jerome, 286–290; and *Dialogi adversus Pelagianos*: Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 221–227, Kelly, Jerome, 309–322.

4 For the networks of hostility and friendship within the Christian elite, see Clark, The Origenist Controversy, esp. 11–42, 246–247, Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 73–74, 242, Hunter, Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy, 454, Maier, The Topography of Heresy and Dissent in Late-Fourth-Century Rome, 232–249. Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 14 refers to non-theological issues lying beneath the surface of the Origenist controversy.

Bible in his polemical writings and Benôit Jeanjean has analyzed Jerome as polemicist and heresiologist.<sup>5</sup> My approach is somewhat different. Instead, I focus on discussing which rhetorical strategies Jerome uses to construe a particular image of an opponent and to undermine the opponent's position, thus reinforcing his own position.

## 2. Weakening opposing arguments

Jerome's polemical works against Rufinus, Helvidius, Jovinian, Vigilantius and John of Jerusalem are targeted against specific writings of the opponents. In *Against Jovinian* he announces that he goes through item by item the antagonist's work that he aims to refute.<sup>6</sup> One of Jerome's ways of repudiating opposing arguments was to label them as inconsistent and even paradoxical. An antagonist's reasoning is refuted by describing its consequences *ad absurdum*.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Jerome uses this method in his dismissal of Jovinian's claim that God has designed animals for humans as nutrition and therefore it is wrong to abstain from eating them (as ascetics did). Jerome reasons that if everything that moves and lives was made for food and prepared for the stomach, then why were animals such as elephants, lions, leopards and wolves created? In order to embarrass his adversary, Jerome continues the list with vipers, scorpions, bugs, lice and fleas, vultures, eagles, crows, hawks, whales, dolphins, seals and small snails. Neither do people eat the flesh of lions, vipers, vultures, storks, kites or worms. Then he proceeds to argue that God did not create animals for nutrition but for medical uses.<sup>8</sup>

5 For the structural analysis of Jerome's polemical works, see Opelt 1973, 13–154, and for the elements of Jerome's rhetoric, see Opelt 1973, 155–196. Wiesen classified Jerome's polemic as targeted against contemporary society, churchmen, women, heretics, Jews and pagans, and finally personal enemies. Claudi 1997, 39–79; Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme entre polémique et hérésiologie*, 143–153.

6 E.g., *contra Iovinianum* 1.4. For Jerome's argumentation against specific writings, see Opelt 1973, 156–159.

7 Opelt 1973, 170–171 calls this method *Verdeutlichung*. Other examples: *contra Iovinianum* 1.33; *contra Pelagianos* 1.23; *contra Rufinum* 2.12.

8 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.6. What is interesting in both Jerome's and Jovinian's argumentation is that neither argues for the existence of animals for their own sake. Both writers are boxed into justifying the existence of animals for the use of humans. The *ad absurdum* method is closely related to the straw man strategy in which rival views are twisted into a simplified construction that is more painless to contest.

### 3. Intellectual disqualification

Opposing views could be labelled as intellectually dubious in many other ways, too. Jerome depicts Jovinian's and Rufinus' arguments as so preposterous that one cannot refrain from laughing at them.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, rivalling opinions are ridiculed as old-womanish. When defending himself against the insinuations made by Rufinus, Jerome asserts that he will not lower himself to the stupidities of old-womanish quarrels (*anilium iurgiorum deliramenta*), even if he could for his turn throw mischievous allusions against Rufinus.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in regard to John of Jerusalem, Jerome waves his views aside as the nonsense of old hags (*aniles et superfluae cantilenae*) and the jokes that nursemaids tell to children (*ludicra quaedam afferunt gerulae*).<sup>11</sup> Here Jerome follows the Roman and Christian traditions of disparaging rivalling views and beliefs as old wives' tales.<sup>12</sup> For his part, Jerome's views and practices seem to have been labelled as the folly of miserable women (*muliercularum deliramenta*) by Vigilantius.<sup>13</sup>

In the strategy of intellectual disqualification, the personality of an antagonist is inseparable from his arguments and vice versa. For instance, the insanity of an opponent generates mad arguments. Jerome portrays his opponents as raving with madness, using terms such as *vecordia*, *rabies*, *insanum caput* and *morbis phreneticus*.<sup>14</sup> Jovinian is seized with madness to such an extent that he should be bound with chains (*Hippocratis*

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- 9 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.28: *Quis autem risum tenere queat*; *contra Rufinum* 3.23: *risum tenere non possum*. Cf. *Contra Luciferianos* 12 and *contra Helvidium* 10.
- 10 *Contra Rufinum* 3.22. Rufinus had alluded to the obscure circumstances of Jerome's infamous departure from Rome and his voyage to Palestine in 385. Nonetheless, Jerome turns the accusation into a counter-attack, insinuating that Rufinus could also be blamed for many things.
- 11 *Contra Iohannem* 14 and 21; for the discussion on the latter passage, see also n. 66.
- 12 In a similar way Paulinus of Nola, for instance, labels the opinions of Platonists as ridiculous fables of old women (epistulae 16.4): *ridiculam anilis fabulae cantilenam*; also epistulae 1.9: *aniles quaestiones*. Roman and Christian writers respectively despised popular and rivalling religious practices as old-womanish superstitions, *aniles superstitiones*; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 21.16.18: *anilis superstitio*; Lactantius *Institutiones Divinae* 5.2: *cohibita impia et anili superstitione*; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum* 17.4. For the technique, see also Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 73–74.
- 13 *Contra Vigilantium* 12. Jerome implies that Vigilantius might deride his views as *muliercularum deliramenta*. See also n. 57.
- 14 *Consueta vecordia*: *Contra Iovinianum* 1.26; *rabies*: *contra Helvidium* 1; *insanum caput*: *contra Vigilantium* 5; *arreptum morbo phrenetico*: *Contra Iovinianum* 1.3.

*vinculis alligandum*).<sup>15</sup> Jerome seems to have regarded this slander as so effective that he also employs it in reviling Vigilantius, who has lost his head and therefore needs to be bound with chains.<sup>16</sup>

If the opponent is not raving with madness, he is at least stupid and ignorant.<sup>17</sup> Jovinian is characterized by his customary stupidity (*illa solita stoliditate*). Nonetheless, Jovinian's foolishness does not hinder Jerome from reviling Jovinian as a cunning debater (*callidus disputator*).<sup>18</sup> Those who criticized Jerome's revisions of the old Latin versions of the gospels were two-legged asses (*ad nostros bipedes asellos*) for whom he should blow a trumpet because a lyre would not affect them.<sup>19</sup> In Rufinus' case Jerome's abuse is at its harshest: when mocking his ignorance, Jerome states that in fact all of Rufinus' writing should be destroyed.<sup>20</sup> Irony is one of Jerome's ways of deriding Rufinus, whom he calls the column of wisdom (*sapientiae columen*).<sup>21</sup>

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15 Contra Iovinianum 1.3: *Nonne vel febrem somniare eum putes, vel arreptum morbo phrenetico, Hippocratis vinculis alligandum?* Jerome refers to the chains that were recommended for mental patients in medical literature.

16 Contra Vigilantium 4: *hominem moti capitis, atque Hippocratis vinculis alligandum.*

17 Extreme ignorance: e.g., contra Helvidium 18; 1: *homo rusticanus et vix primis litteris imbutus.*

18 Contra Iovinianum 1.25; also *stulte*. Cf. Contra Iovinianum 2.21: *ad perversitatem sui dogmatis callidus disputator inclinatus*. The inconsistency in Jerome's depiction of Jovinian is also pointed out by Opelt 1973, 59 n. 172.

19 Epistulae 27.3. For the context of the dispute, see Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 161 and Kelly, Jerome, 89. For the use of animal metaphors, see the discussion below.

20 Contra Rufinum 3.26: *omnis tibi scriptura delenda est*. Jerome accuses Rufinus of teaching what he does not know and writing what he is ignorant of – that is, of admitting to a certain level of uncertainty. Jerome also derides Rufinus for confessing ignorance on the origin of the soul: contra Rufinum 3.30; see Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 222; Fürst, Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus, 208.

21 Contra Rufinum 1.13: *sapientiae columen et norma Catonianae severitatis*. This is reminiscent of Cicero's *columen rei publicae* (pro Sestio 8.18). Opelt 1973, 89 n. 57.

## 4. Barbarous language

Attacks against an opponent's language and style are a significant part of Jerome's polemic. This is an effective way of questioning intellectual credibility – if one cannot write elegantly, one cannot think properly – and diverting attention from substance to style.

The most callous critique is targeted against Jovinian's style. Jerome states that he could not even understand what Jovinian had written – so great was the barbarity (*scriptorum tanta barbaries est*) of his writings and so filled with mistakes (*tantis vitiis spurcissimus sermo confusus est*) was his depraved language.<sup>22</sup> At one moment Jovinian puffs himself up, but at another he is down to earth. This is how Jerome describes Jovinian's style, comparing him to an injured snake that now and then tries to rise up but must give up in its attempt. In this way Jerome implies that the grand style is too much for Jovinian, who nonetheless is not satisfied with human language but tries to aim higher than he can reach.<sup>23</sup> Jerome sums up in quoting Horace, "the mountains will be in labour, and a ridiculous mouse will be brought forth" (*Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*).<sup>24</sup> Jerome culminates his attack by comparing the rival's writing with vomiting (*quod hesternam crapulam ructans, ita evomuit*).<sup>25</sup>

Jerome parallels Vigilantius' writing with vomiting, too.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, he connects his derision of Vigilantius' style with Vigilantius' low social origins as the son of a tavern keeper from the Aquitanian Calagurris. Vigilantius comes from Calagurris, the birthplace of one of the

22 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.1. Jovinian's style is also called *portenta verborum* and *descriptionis dedecus* (*Contra Iovinianum* 1.3). See also Clausi, *Bibbia e polemica negli scritti controversiali di Gerolamo*, 46 and Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme entre polémique et hérésiologie*, 145–147.

23 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.1: *Totus enim tumet, totus iacet: attollit se per singula, et quasi debilitatus coluber, in ipso conatu frangitur. Non est contentus nostro, id est, humano more loqui, alius quiddam agreditur*. For Jerome's attack on style, see Opelt 1973, 38 and Kelly, *Jerome*, 183.

24 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.1, quoting Horace's *Ars poetica* v. 139. In referring to the incomprehensibility of Jovinian's text, Jerome also quotes Plautus' *Pseudolus* on the impenetrability of Sibylla's prophecies; in order to understand Jovinian's obscurity, one should be able to prophesize (*nam divinandum est*).

25 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.1. Here Jerome follows the tradition of Roman invectives in which the opponent's literary production is labelled as *nausea* or *vomitus*, e. g., Cicero, *Orationes Philippicae* 5.7.20. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 217; 223.

26 *Contra Vigilantium* 3: *libros [...] quos inter crapulam stertens evomuit*.

greatest Roman teachers of eloquence, Quintilian, and this leads Jerome to joke that Vigilantius is a mute Quintilian (*mutus Quintilianus*).<sup>27</sup>

Rufinus' language is also a target of Jerome's mockery: Rufinus only mumbles in Latin and proceeds at a tortoise's slow pace. He should return to the school of *grammaticus* with children to learn eloquence.<sup>28</sup> Jerome declares that he takes greater pains in reading Rufinus' text than Rufinus does in writing it.<sup>29</sup>

Jerome asserts that he had decided to keep quiet about Rufinus' miserable language. However, he must pounce on some errors because Rufinus' disciples esteem their master's eloquence.<sup>30</sup> Jerome is aware that his critique of language might be inopportune in Christian literature. He writes that it is not customary among Christians to reprimand errors of language. However, he justifies his conduct in explaining that in his mockery he will show how irresponsible it is to teach and write what one does not know. The same applies to prudence in thinking. Thus, Jerome implies that faults in language correspond to faults in thinking.<sup>31</sup>

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27 *Contra Vigilantium* 1: *Iste caupo Calagurritanus, et in perversum propter nomen viculi sui mutus Quintilianus miscet aquam vino*. For the mixture of wine and water, see below. Either Vigilantius' father was a taverner or his family was connected with selling wine, but Jerome makes Vigilantius himself a taverner. For more mockery of Vigilantius's style, see *Contra Vigilantium* 3: *imperitus, et verbis et scientia, et sermone inconditus*.

28 *Contra Rufinum* 1.17. Jerome is attached to this expression of a tortoise's speed, for he uses it in *contra Pelagianos* 3.16: *testudineo incedens gradu*. Cf. Plautus (*Aulularia* 49): *Testudineum istum tibi ego grandibo gradum*. Wiesen, St. Jerome as a Satirist, 179; Opelt 1973, 153 n. 16.

29 *Contra Rufinum* 1.30: *id enim in legendo patior, quod tu pateris in scribendo*. Similarly Jerome exclaims that he has more trouble in reviling the text than Rufinus in writing it (*contra Rufinum* 2.9: *Tam putide et confuse loquitur, ut plus ego in reprehendendo laborem, quam ille in scribendo*). Mockery of Rufinus' style is also found in *contra Rufinum* 2.9: *Rogo quae ista licentia figurarum? Quae modorum et temporum perturbatio?*; 2.10: *O infelices animas, quae tantis vitiorum lanceis vulnerantur!*; 2.15; 3.6; 3.10; 3.16; 2.11: *verborum portent*. For the mockery of an opponent's uncouthness, see Opelt, *Die Lateinischen Schimpfwörter und verwandte sprachliche Erscheinungen*, 230–231.

30 *Contra Rufinum* 2.6: *Super verborum vitiis tacere decreveram; sed quia discipuli eius mirantur eloquentiam praeceptoris, pauca perstringam*. Before criticizing Rufinus' style, Jerome (*Contra Rufinum* 2.5) reproached Rufinus for evading the questions at issue. For the charge of obscuring the real issues, see below.

31 *Contra Rufinum* 2.10: *Scio inter Christianos verborum vitia non solere reprehendi; sed ex paucis ostendere volui, cuius temeritatis sit docere quod nescias, scribere quod ignores: ut simile prudentiam et in sensibus requiramus*.

Furthermore, in the very same chapter Jerome both reproaches Rufinus as an illiterate writer (συνγραφεὺς ἀγγραμματός) and declares that he will not seize on language but arguments. He writes, “I will refute you, not as the user of solaecisms and barbarisms but as a lying, deceitful and impudent man.”<sup>32</sup>

## 5. The snares of logic and rhetoric versus Christian simplicity

In theological disputes adversaries are often blamed for using rhetorical trickery, traps of dialectic and subtleties of philosophy.<sup>33</sup> Jerome satirizes Rufinus as a most eloquent person who plays with rhetorical tricks and pretends simplicity. John of Jerusalem is labelled as using avoidance and deceit.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to an opponent's rhetorical, dialectical, logical and philosophical machinery, Jerome announces that he himself represents Christian simplicity and plain faith.<sup>35</sup> In *Contra Helvidium* he asserts that he neither has any aspiration to enter the camps of eloquence nor makes use of the traps of dialecticians or Aristotle's thicket. Instead, the very words of Scripture must be brought in.<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, after this declaration he starts his own sophisticated and even complicated production of Biblical evidence, especially in chapter 4. At the end of *Contra Helvidium* Jerome admits that after all he has been rhetorical and played a little the role of a *declamator*. This, however, is Helvidius' fault because he has

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32 *Contra Rufinum* 3.6: *et te nequaquam soloecistam et barbarum, sed mendacem, subdolum, impudentem esse convincam*. In *contra Rufinum* 3.10 Jerome returns to Rufinus' stylistic faults (*salebris et voragibus vitiorum*).

33 Heretics were usually labelled as addicted to pagan philosophy and led astray by secular wisdom. For the connection between Greek philosophy and heresy, see Lenox-Conyngham, Ambrose and Philosophy, 120.

34 *Contra Rufinum* 3.21: *homo eloquentissimus arte ludis rhetorica*; [...] *Haec est tua tota simplicitas*; *Contra Iohannem* 19: *strophae et praestrigiae*; cf. *contra Pelagianos* 3.12: *theatrales praestrigias*. Cf. commentarii in Osee 3.12 on the eloquence and tricks of heretics (*verboſitate et argutiis hereticorum*) and commentarii in Ezechielem 2.7 on their pompous words (*verba pompatica*).

35 For the Christian simplicity in Jerome's writings, see Lardet, *L'apologie de Jérôme contre Rufin*, 29–30.

36 *Contra Helvidium* 2: *Non campum rhetorici desideramus eloquii, non dialecticorum tendiculas, nec Aristotelis spineta conquirimus: ipsa Scripturarum verba ponenda sunt*. For the attack against Helvidius' style, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 105.



compelled Jerome to this. Nonetheless, Helvidius has been overcome by the truth.<sup>37</sup>

In *Dialogus contra Luciferianos*, the interlocutors accuse each other of using rhetorical and logical trickery and discarding Christian simplicity. The 'Orthodox' contrasts the core of Scripture and the flowers of rhetoric.<sup>38</sup> For his part the Luciferian urges his adversary, the 'Orthodox', to leave aside the argumentation of philosophers and speak with Christian simplicity – and not to follow dialecticians but rather fishermen.<sup>39</sup>

## 6. A Luxurious Life

The moral disqualification of an opponent is standard ammunition in invectives against religious rivals and theological opponents. The purpose is to undermine opponents' credibility by attacking their moral character. In these attacks, heresy<sup>40</sup> was recurrently equated with immorality. Jerome follows these standards, connecting his adversaries with luxury, drunkenness, lingering with women and sexual promiscuity.

Jovinian challenged Jerome's version of asceticism, and therefore, in Jerome's eyes, he must be loafing in luxury. In one of the most malicious passages Jovinian is depicted as a slave to vice and extravagance (*servus [...] vitiorum atque luxuriae*). He is a dog that has returned to his vomit (*canis revertens ad vomitum suum*) – this is a frequently used metaphor for heretics and apostates that Jerome applies in labelling him as a renegade monk.<sup>41</sup> Jovinian has exchanged his ascetic life for a lavish life:

37 *Contra Helvidium*22: *Rhetoricati sumus, et in morem declamatorum, paululum lusimus. Tu nos, Helvidi, coegisti, [...]*.

38 *Contra Luciferianos*11: [...] *non quomodo Scripturarum medullas ebibant, sed quomodo aurem populi declamatorum flosculus mulceant*. Cf. similar mutual charges in *contra Pelagianos* 1.14; 3.3; 3.7; 3.12. The 'orthodox' interlocutor also criticizes bishops who have imbued from worldly learning – *de Aristotelis et Platonis sinu* – and asserts that the Arian heresy emerges from secular wisdom. The idea that heresy originated from Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, was commonplace in heresiological literature; see Lenox-Conyngham, *Ambrose and Philosophy*, 112–128.

39 *Contra Luciferianos*14: *Oro te ut, philosophorum argumentatio deposita, Christiana simplicitate tecum loquaris, si tamen non dialecticos sequaris, sed piscatores*.

40 'Heresy' and 'heretics' should be read with inverted commas throughout this article. The same applies to the words 'pagans' and 'paganism'.

41 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.40. The dog returning to his vomit: Prov. 26.11; see Kinzig, "Trample upon me ...", 92–111.

Jerome lists that Jovinian has abandoned his filthy tunic, bare feet, and simple bread and water for a beaming white garment, smooth skin, for honeyed wine and refined meat dishes, for exquisite sauces, for baths and massages and for taverns. Furthermore, Jerome writes, Jovinian has preferred his belly to Christ (*ventrem praeferat Christo*). Jerome describes Jovinian as handsome, fat, sleek and bright as if he were a bridegroom (*iste formosus monachus, crassus, nitidus, dealbatus et quasi sponsus semper incedens*) – this is also a spiteful allusion to Jovinian's defence of marriage.<sup>42</sup>

We have no indication that Jovinian abandoned his own ascetic life (despite his defence of the value of marriage and procreation). Nevertheless, Jerome continuously depicts him as a traitor who has transformed from a dirty poor monk to a presumptuous dandy. Several contrasts are drawn between Jovinian's earlier life as a monk and what Jerome claims is his present life: earlier Jovinian was barefooted, now he walks in shoes, which are even decorated; earlier he wore simple dirty clothes, now he is dressed in fashionable linen and silk. Jovinian's appearance is depicted as the opposite of an ascetic: his cheeks shine red, his skin glows, and hair adorns his head.<sup>43</sup>

The naming of Jovinian as Epicurus belongs to these labels of luxury. Jerome calls Jovinian *Epicurus noster*, who lustfully loiters in his gardens with his youths and women. Jovinian's adherents are fat, sleek and shining white as well.<sup>44</sup> They can always be recognized because they are so handsome, their hair neatly curled and well-groomed, their cheeks nicely ruby,

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42 Contra Iovinianum 1.40: *Nam cum monachum esse se iactitet: et post sordidam tunicam, et nudos pedes, et cibarium panem, et aquae potum, ad candidas vestes, et nitidam cutem, ad mulsum et elaboratas carnes, ad iura Apitii et Paxami ad balneas quoque ac frictulas, et popinas se conferat, [...]. Crassus, nitidus and dealbatus are also repeated in Contra Iovinianum 2.36.*

43 Contra Iovinianum 2.21: *Ante nudo eras pede: modo non solum calceto, sed et ornato. Tunc pexa tunica et nigra subucula vestiebaris, sordidatus et pallidus, et callosam opere gestitans manum; nunc lineis et sericis vestibus, et Atrebatum ac Laodiceae indumentis ornatus incedis. Rubent buccae, nitet cutis, comae in occipitium frontemque tornantur: protensus est aqualiculus, insurgunt humeri, turget guttur, et de obesis faucibus vix suffocata verba promuntur.*

44 Contra Iovinianum 2.36: *Nunc restat ut Epicurum nostrum subantem in hortulis suis inter adolescentulos et mulierculos alloquamur. Favent tibi crassi, nitidi, dealbati [...].* Jerome uses disparaging diminutives such as *hortulis, adolescentulos* and *mulierculos*.

and they belong to Jovinian's herd (*de tuo armento*), or rather they grunt among his pigs. This is another reference to Epicurus' school.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, Jovinian's group is contrasted with Jerome's flock, from which come the gloomy, pale and dirty as if they were strangers to this world. The grunting of Jovinian's herd is contraposed with Jerome's supporters, who keep silent in speech but speak through their appearance and gesture.<sup>46</sup> Jerome refers to the popularity of Jovinian's teaching.<sup>47</sup> However, Jerome asserts, this indicates only that many want to fall into their own vices. Jerome again jokes about Epicurus' pigs, painting a picture of Jovinian's followers as being fattened to be pork for hell (*gehennae succidiae*).<sup>48</sup>

## 7. Sexual promiscuity and excess

The image of the opponent's luxurious life is closely connected with the denigration of sexual excesses. In Jerome's rhetoric, Jovinian and Vigilantius, who confronted Jerome's strand of asceticism and tested his views on virginity, are marked by sexual intemperance and promiscuity.

Jerome parallels Jovinian with Basilides, who in the heresiological literature recurrently appears as one of the most renowned heretics. Basilides, the master of luxury and shameful intercourse (*magister luxuriae*

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45 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36: *Quoscunque formosos, quoscunque calamistratos, quos crine composito, quos rubentibus buccis videro, de tuo armento sunt, imo inter tuos sues grunniunt.* For the use of the swine metaphor in the polemic against the Epicureans, see Opelt, *Die Lateinischen Schimpfwörter und verwandte sprachliche Erscheinungen*, 233–234. Jerome's mockery is also reminiscent of Horace's ep. 1.4. v. 15–16: *Epicuri de grege porcus.*

46 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36: *De nostro grege tristes, pallidi, sordidati, et quasi peregrini huius saeculi, licet sermone taceant, habitu loquuntur et gestu.*

47 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36: *Ne glories, quod multos discipulos habeas.* The multitude of Jovinian's followers is contrasted with the small number of Jesus' disciples (Jesus was even left alone on the cross). In *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37 Jerome refers to Jovinian's rich and aristocratic adherents. For Jovinian's success in aristocratic circles, see Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 72–73 and Duval, *L'affaire Jovinien*, 34, 38–39.

48 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36: *Quod multi acquiescunt sententiae tuae, indicium voluptatis est [...] plures porci post te currant, quos gehennae succidiae nutrias?* Another allusion to Epicurus' herd is in *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37, in which Jovinian's swineherds are richer than the shepherds of Jerome's group.

*et turpissimorum complexuum*), has been transformed into Jovinian.<sup>49</sup> In their sexual intemperance Jovinian's followers are compared to goats and horses. Quoting Jeremiah, Jerome depicts them as mad horses that neigh after women as soon as they see them.<sup>50</sup> Jerome also uses other animal metaphors to stress their sexual indulgence: in Jovinian's bird houses there are not doves but hoopoes, which fly around the whole brothel of filthy debauchery.<sup>51</sup>

Vigilantius receives his share of Jerome's mockery. According to Jerome, Vigilantius loosens lust's bridle and increases the natural ardour of the flesh. Then humans would by no means differ from swine and other brute animals, Jerome states, employing the same passage from Jeremiah with the imagery of mad horses as in his attack against Jovinian.<sup>52</sup>

In Jerome's denigration, sexual promiscuity is the outcome of the opposing view. After Jovinian's teaching, men and women bathe together, and consequently, even the facade of modesty has been uncovered.<sup>53</sup> The female entourage of Jerome's adversaries, Jovinian and Pelagius, are called Amazons.<sup>54</sup> In his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome refers rudely to the senate of matrons and women that influence ecclesiastical life. The charge of lingering with women or the insinuation of female influence had been a conventional way of embarrassing a rival in Roman political invectives, and this traditional arsenal was utilized in the polemic between

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49 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37. Other insinuations of Jovinian's sexual interests: *Contra Iovinianum* 1.20; 2.36: *Aristippi multitudo* as an insinuation of hedonism; see Opelt 1973, 62 n. 192.

50 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37: [...] *et hirci plurimas secum capras trahunt. 'Equi insanientes in feminas facti sunt'* [Jer. 5:8], *statim, ut mulieres viderint, adhinniunt, et impatientiam suam, proh nefas!*

51 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37: [...] *in aviariis tuis non turtures, sed upupae nutriuntur, quae tota foetidae voluptatis lustra circumvolent. Lustrum* refers both to a nest of wild animals and a brothel.

52 *Contra Vigilantium* 2: *Hoc docuit Dormitantius, libidini frena permittens, et naturalem carnis ardorem, qui in adolescentia plerumque fervescit, suis hortatibus duplicans. [...] ut nihil sit quo distemus a porcis, quo differamus a brutis animantibus, quo ab equis, de quibus scriptum est* [Jer. 5:8]: *'Equi insanientes in feminas facti sunt mihi: unusquisque in uxorem proximi sui hinniebat'*.

53 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36 states that Jovinian has shown his approval for baths for both sexes.

54 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37: *Amazonas exerta mamma, et nudo brachio et genu*; *contra Pelagianos* 1.25: *Amazonas tuas*; 2.24.

rivalling Christian groups.<sup>55</sup> As was discussed above, opposing views were reviled as old-womanish nonsense.

The charge of association with women was also used against Jerome's camp. It is well known that Jerome was also forced to defend himself against the scandals and charges of consorting with aristocratic women in Rome.<sup>56</sup> In his treatise *Vigilantius* had labelled the celebration of *vigiliae* as stimulating promiscuity, and Jerome must defend the *vigiliae* against these charges. Jerome also defends himself against *Vigilantius*' insinuations against the *muliercularum deliramenta*, writing that he is not ashamed of having the faith of those women who were the first to see the risen Christ. He declares that *Vigilantius* is free to belch with the worldly people; he himself will fast with women and religious men. For his part, Jerome makes a counter-offensive associating *Vigilantius* with the looms of women (*inter mulierum textrinas*) as well as taverns (*in tabernis tuis*) and the ignorant mob (*vulgus indoctum*).<sup>57</sup>

## 8. Cheaters, charlatans and liars

The opponent's motives are implied as doubtful and self-seeking. In his denigration of *Vigilantius*, Jerome explains that *Vigilantius* as a tavern keeper is worried about the revenue of his taverns. If temperance and sobriety prevail, his taverns will not be profitable. For Jerome, *Vigilantius*' greed is evident because *Vigilantius* wants to prevent payments sent to Jerusalem *in usus sanctorum*.<sup>58</sup>

55 *Commentarii in Esaiam* 2.3.12 (CCL 73, 52). Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 108. For the insinuations of female influence, see Cooper, *Insinuations of Womanly Influence*, 150–164.

56 E.g., in *Epistulae* 45.3: *matronae et mulieres sint noster senatus*. Jerome complains about the indignation that his relations with aristocratic women, especially with the rich widow Paula, aroused in Rome. For Jerome's circle of women in Rome, see Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis*, 154–170 and Arjava, *Jerome and Women*, 5–18.

57 *Vigilantius*' charges: contra *Vigilantium* 9; 12; Jerome's defence: contra *Vigilantium* 12: *Tu ructato cum saeculi hominibus, ego ieiunabo cum feminis, imo cum religiosis viris*. Jerome's counter-attack: contra *Vigilantium* 6.

58 Contra *Vigilantium* 13: *ne tabernae tuae lucra non habeant; vigiliis diaboli ac temulentia convivium tota nocte exercere non possis*. In the same passage Jerome anticipates counter charges of greed against himself. *Vigilantius* is also labelled as a drunkard in contra *Vigilantium* 10–12. Insinuations of avarice appears also in Contra *Luciferianos* 2.12.

Jerome labels his adversaries, especially John of Jerusalem, as deceivers who lead ignorant people astray. When listening to John of Jerusalem, the uneducated populace would not be able to suspect any trick or snare.<sup>59</sup> As a cunning disputer Jovinian twists the Scriptural passages to support his teaching.<sup>60</sup> He is both one of the predicted Antichrists and the mythical Proteus. As Proteus and as a slippery snake he assumes various portentous forms: he is at the same time both Epicurean in his advocacy of sexual intercourse and gluttony and Stoic in his reckoning of rewards and punishments.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Jovinian is a deceitful charlatan (*fictus ariolus*) and false prophet. This is evident because false prophets (*pseudoprophetae*) promise nice things, and the truth is bitter.<sup>62</sup>

Rufinus in particular is branded as a liar. Jerome declares with irony that he must block his nose in order to escape the torment caused by the odour of Rufinus' truth and benedictions.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, in his apology against Rufinus, Jerome repeatedly accuses Rufinus of having forged and circulated a letter in Jerome's name.<sup>64</sup>

Jerome stresses the insincerity of his adversaries, especially Rufinus and John of Jerusalem, by charging them with evading the real issue. Rufinus is said to abuse Jerome's simplicity and by his tricks and pomp of

59 *Contra Iohannem* 24: [...] *ut auribus illuderet nescientium [...] audit vulgus indoctum [...] haec audiens indoctum vulgus [...] nullam stropham, nullas insidias suspicatur*; 27: *ad decipiendas aures ignorantium*; 36. For cheaters and charlatans in the polemic between philosophical schools, see Johnson, *The New Testament's anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic*, 430–431.

60 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.21: *ad perversitatem sui dogmatis callidus disputator inclinatur*; see also *Contra Iovinianum* 2.24: *perverse et lubrice*.

61 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.21: *Simulque miror, quomodo serpens lubricus et Proteus noster in variarum se mutet portenta formarum. Qui enim in coitu et saturitate Epicureus est, subito in retributione meritorum Stoicus efficitur*. Cf. *Contra Iovinianum* 2.33: *noster Zeno*; 2.36: *Epicurum nostrum*. This charge also serves to assimilate the opponent with pagan philosophy. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 233.

62 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36; 2.37.

63 *Contra Rufinum* 3.26: *Faciám ergo quod praecipis, claudam nares meas, ne veritatis et benedictionum tuarum suavissimo odore crucientur*; also 3.16. Rufinus had blamed Jerome for the smell of his sins. The smell alludes to lying. Opelt 1973, 114 n. 242; Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 233. Rufinus appears as a liar in *contra Rufinum* 2.2; 2.3: *pudet me apertissimi mendacii*; 3.1; 3.10: ironically *homini veracissimo*.

64 *Contra Rufinum* 2.24. For his part, Jerome refutes accusations according to which his adherents had both falsified and stolen Rufinus' writings (*contra Rufinum* 3.5; 3.3).

words turns attention from a specific question to other matters.<sup>65</sup> John of Jerusalem dodges the real issues: Jerome blames him for escaping the combat zone and for directing “us rustics” off track in the manner of nursemaids who distract children with little jokes when they ask for food. Moreover, when John is asked for a hand, he offers a foot.<sup>66</sup>

The deceitfulness is made visible in Jerome's apology against Rufinus, in which Rufinus appears as a false friend. Jerome writes that it is easier to beware of a clear enemy than one who hides under the name of a friend.<sup>67</sup>

Jerome accuses his opponents of feigning simplicity. Rufinus puts on a pretence of simplicity in vain because Jerome knows his malicious purposes.<sup>68</sup> The same applies to John of Jerusalem, whose simplicity is interpreted as mischievousness and a circus performance, such as walking on tiptoe on eggs and spikes.<sup>69</sup>

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65 Contra Rufinum 2.5: *sed occupatus in aliis, simplicitate nostra abuteris, et praestigiiis pompaque verborum haerere nos non sinis quaestioni*. As was mentioned above, Jerome himself draws attention to the style and language of his opponents.

66 Contra Iohannem 16: *de scammate et loco certaminis egrediens*; 21: *sicut parvulus cibum poscentibus, ludicra quaedam afferunt gerulae, ut avocent mentes eorum, sic et tu nos rusticos avocas ad alia*; see also n. 11; Contra Iohannem 18: *manum peteris, et pedem porrigis*. Opelt 1973, 97–98; Clausi, *Bibbia e polemica negli scritti controversiali di Gerolamo*, 47.

67 Contra Rufinum 2.35: *nisi quod levius est, professum inimicum cavere, quam hostem latentem sub amici nomine sustinere*; also 1.1: *Quod sub amici nomine inimici insidias deprehendi?* Jerome emphatically repeats the terms of friendship: contra Rufinum 2.34: *amicice dulcissime*; 2.35: *ad familiarem meum*; 1.10: *audi consilium amici*; 1.11: *amicum quondam tuum*; 1.1: *frater et collega*.

68 Contra Rufinum 1.1: *Simplicitatem obtendere non potest, in quo artifex deprehenditur malitia*. See also contra Rufinum 1.2 ironically: *simpliciter errasse se iurat; simplicitatem tuam; nisi forte eadem simplicitate*; 1.9: *amicice simplicissime*.

69 Contra Iohannem 2: *Quam ille simplicitatem vocat, ego malitiam interpretor. [...] Nunc vero quae ista simplicitas est, quasi super ova et aristas inter theatrales praestigias pendenti gradu incedere*; also 22: *et simplicitas tua nihil in se habeat quod callide taceas; rusticitate simulata*; 28.

## 9. The rhetoric of abuse *ad personam*: appearance, origin and naming

Discrediting a rival by ridiculing his or her outward appearance and social origin was part of invective rhetoric in antiquity.<sup>70</sup> In the case of Rufinus, Jerome makes a caricature of his former friend's outward appearance, referring to the wrinkles on his forehead and his knitted eyebrows.<sup>71</sup> Vigilantius is described as a drunkard with a red face and foaming lips who is shouting wildly (*rubente facie et spumantibus labiis, effrenatisque conviciis*).<sup>72</sup> In an attack against an adversary whom he only calls by the abusive name Onasus, Jerome tells him to hide his big nose and keep his mouth shut; only then will he look handsome and be a good speaker.<sup>73</sup>

As was mentioned above, Jerome aims to embarrass Vigilantius by alluding to his origin from the family of a tavern keeper. In fact, in Jerome's vilification Vigilantius becomes the tavern keeper himself, and his connection with selling wine is repeatedly derided. For instance, Jerome depicts Vigilantius as forming his theology surrounded by cups (*inter phialas*), cakes (*ad placentas*) and banquets (*inter epulas*).<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Jerome scoffs at Vigilantius' origin from the Aquitanian Gaul and invents savage ancestors for him, the Vectones, Arrabaci and Celtiberi, whom Pompeius conquered centuries ago. Jerome states that Vigilantius originates from among brigands and uses this as a pretext to label Vigilantius as a raider upon the church. Consequently, Vigilantius is associated with barbarity and robbery and branded as an internal enemy.<sup>75</sup>

Jerome reviles Vigilantius' cowardly and shameful behaviour during his visit to Jerome's ascetic community in Bethlehem in 395. The com-

70 Cicero (*De oratore* 2.54–71; *Brutus* 47), for instance, discusses the ridiculing of opponents in speeches. Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 6.3.28) allows insults against adversaries in speeches. The writer of *Ad Herennium* (1.5) advises the orator to bring opponents into contempt by presenting their weaknesses. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 168–169, 211.

71 *Contra Rufinum* 1.13: *hominem rugosae frontis adductique supercilii*; also 1.32: *Quid austeritate frontis, et contractis rugatisque naribus. Rugata fronte* is one of Jerome's favourite expressions (*commentarii in epistulam ad Ephesios* 2.4, PL 26, 525C; *commentarii in in epistulam ad Titum* 1, PL 26, 601 A). Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 98–99; Kelly, *Jerome*, 253.

72 *Contra Vigilantium* 10.

73 *Epistulae* 40. Kelly, *Jerome*, 110. For the identification of 'Onasus', see Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 203–205 and Kelly, *Jerome*, 110.

74 *Contra Vigilantium* 1. Kelly, *Jerome*, 289.

75 *Contra Vigilantium* 4.



munity was awakened by an earthquake in the middle of the night, and Vigilantius was so terrified that he began praying in a completely undressed state, as Jerome malevolently puts it, stripped of tunic and faith (*tunica et fide nudus*).<sup>76</sup> The most abusive insults are hurled at Vigilantius and Rufinus. Jerome calls Vigilantius' teaching dirty excrement vomited from the abyss of his heart. Rufinus' views arise from the dung heap of his heart.<sup>77</sup>

Names are important, and mocking an adversary using defamatory names belongs essentially to the genre of invectives.<sup>78</sup> Jerome plays on the name Vigilantius, 'Awake', composing a contrasting name Dormitantius, 'Sleepy'. In fact, Jerome is so fond of his pun that he repeats the name Dormitantius several times in his treatise<sup>79</sup> and plays with the verbs *dormire* (to sleep) and *vigilare* (to be awake).<sup>80</sup> For his part Rufinus is the target of pejorative renaming as Grunnius Corocotta Porcellus, 'Porky the Grunter', thus associating him with grunting swines.<sup>81</sup>

76 *Contra Vigilantium* 11. Jerome implies that Vigilantius had also been drunk. For the incident, see Kelly, Jerome, 193.

77 *Contra Vigilantium* 8: *de barathro pectoris sui coenosam spurcitiā evomens*. Jerome's abuse is a counter-attack against Vigilantius' disparagement of the relics of martyrs as filthy. *contra Rufinum* 3.42: *de uno pectoris sterquilinio*. Cf. *commentarii* in Osee 1.15–16 (CCL 76, 48).

78 E.g., Cicero, *De oratore* 2.249 on the puns on names.

79 *Contra Vigilantium* 1: *Exortus est subito Vigilantius, seu verius Dormitantius, qui immundo spiritu pugnet contra Christi spiritum*; *contra Vigilantium* 2; 4; 8; 15; 17; also *Epistulae* 109.1; 109.3. According to Opelt 1973, 121, Dormitantius as an enthymeme is meant to show that Vigilantius' name is unjustified. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 220 aptly remarks that Dormitantius loses much of its force through ceaseless repetition.

80 *Contra Vigilantium* 5: *Vigilantius ebrius et dormiens*; 6: *vigilans dormis et dormiens scribis*; 10: *dormiente*; 15: *Dormitantius vigilabit*; 16: *Nulla securitas est vicino serpente dormire*; 17: *Dormitantius [...] vigilaverit*; also *Epistulae* 61.4 to Vigilantius. Other puns on names by Jerome are Macarius as the source of unhappiness (*Epistulae* 127.9) and Melania as "bearing witness to the blackness of her wickedness" (*Epistulae* 133.3). Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 223, Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 220; Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme entre polémique et hérésiologie*, 148.

81 Jerome uses the code name Grunnius in, e.g., *commentarii* in *Isaiam*, *praefatio* (CCL 73 A, 465); *Epistulae* 125.18: *Grunnius [...] bene nummatus*. Jerome also calls Rufinus a scorpion and a many-headed hydra. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 14; 146–149; Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme entre polémique et hérésiologie*, 150; Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 220, 229. Jerome (*Epistulae* 138) also renames Pelagius as Catilina, thus connecting him with conspiracy and treachery: see Fürst, *Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus*, 234 n. 19.

Names are also used as polemical enthymemata. For Jerome even the etymology of Jovinian's name is evidence of his wretchedness. Jerome warns his reader to be on guard against Jovinian's name because it is derived from an idol – the Roman deity Jupiter. Now when the Capitol is in ruins and the temples and ceremonies of Jupiter have perished, why should Jupiter's name and vices flourish? With his own name Jovinian is branded with a pagan label.<sup>82</sup>

## 10. Heretical, Jewish and pagan labels

In ecclesiastical disputes, a theological rival was usually discredited by connecting him to a renowned and often already officially condemned heresy. This rhetorical technique, termed *reductio ad haeresim*,<sup>83</sup> was utilized by both Jerome and his opponents. Jerome had to defend his ascetic movement against Jovinian's charges of heresy. He asserts that he and his associates do not follow the teachings of Marcion, the Manichaeans or Tatian.<sup>84</sup> Jerome replies to the accusations of heresy with counter-attacks, for instance, paralleling Jovinian with Basilides, one of the most renowned heretics of earlier centuries. Basilides has transmigrated into Jovinian, Jerome announces.<sup>85</sup> For his part Vigilantius is Jovinian in recarnation.<sup>86</sup>

82 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.38: *Cave Ioviniani nomen, quod de idolo derivatum est. Squalet Capitolium, templa Iovis et caeremoniae conciderunt. Cur vocabulum eius, et vitia apud te vigeant?* For arguing with etymologies, see Opelt, *Art. Etymologie*, 836–837. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 220 n. 62–66. For the pagan label, see below.

83 Stead, *Rhetorical Method in Athanasius*, 131–132; Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy*, 216.

84 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.3; 2.16. 'Manichaean' was frequently used as an abusive term in order to discredit a theological opponent. E.g., Priscillian, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome were denigrated as Manichaeans. Jerome (*Epistulae* 22.13) states that anyone who had become pale from fasting could be labelled Manichaean. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 29–30, 130–146; Hunter, *Rereading the Jovinianist Controversy*, 457–459.

85 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.37. Jerome depicts ecclesiastical history as a battlefield against heresies. No place in the world where Christianity has expanded has been spared from the windings of the snake, that is, heresy.

86 *Contra Vigilantium* 1: *sic in isto Ioviniani mens prava surrexit*. In *contra Pelagianos* 2.15; 2.24; 3.1; 3.15 the opponent is branded as the successor of Jovinian. Jerome's strategy is similar to that of Cyril of Alexandria, who paralleled his ecclesiastical rival Nestorius with Arius, which turned out to be a successful strategy

Vigilantius is bundled together with several renowned heresies. Jerome argues that Vigilantius cannot boast of having created a new crime. Here Jerome follows the heresiological tradition that lumped all the heresies together. This was an efficient rhetorical weapon because a writer could place all the varieties of rivalling views in the same category and hit them with one stroke.<sup>87</sup> Vigilantius' heretical label is reinforced with insinuations about the poison that he spreads around.<sup>88</sup> Jerome writes that Vigilantius mixes water with wine (*miscet aquam vino*): this is both an allusion to the tavern keeping of Vigilantius' father and the charge of mixing the water of heresy with the wine of true doctrine.<sup>89</sup>

In the disputes between Christian groups, the assimilation of rival views with Jews and pagans, especially pagan philosophy, was a frequently used polemical device. In a few instances, Jerome vilifies the views of his rivals as the blasphemies of the Pharisees.<sup>90</sup> Jerome and his opponents connect each other reciprocally with pagan deities, practices or philosophy. Jerome refutes Vigilantius' accusations, according to which the reverence paid to the relics of holy men, vigils held in honour of martyrs and the burning of tapers were in fact pagan practices.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Jerome denies Jovinian's claims that Jerome and his ascetic circle are followers of the pagan Empedocles and Pythagoras.<sup>92</sup> For his part, Jerome uses Jovinian's

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because Arius' views had already been condemned: e.g., epistula Cyrilli ad monachos, ep. 1.7; 1.15 (= ACO 1.1.1 pp. 10–23); hom. 4 (= ACO 1.1.2 p. 104), oratio ad Theodosium imperatorem (= ACO 1.1.1 p. 79). Wessel, Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy, 189, 263–264, 302.

- 87 Contra Vigilantium 8: *ne et in hoc quasi repertor novi sceleris gloriaris*. contra Vigilantium 6 names Balsamus, Barbelus, Manichaeus (i.e., Mani), Leusiboras and Basilides; contra Vigilantium 8 lists Eunomius, Montanus and again Manichaeus.
- 88 Contra Vigilantium 1; 8; also Contra Luciferianos 15; Contra Iohannem 3. The metaphor of poison is commonplace in attacks against heresies. Jerome declares Rufinus' views poison and his own an antidote (contra Rufinum 3.8; also 3.43). Cf. Contra Iohannem 1; 25. Rufinus mixes his poison with honey to make it drinkable (contra Rufinum 1.7); cf. Contra Iohannem 3. For theological maladies, poison and antidote, see Elm, The diagnostic gaze, 94–95 and Lyman, Ascetics and Bishops, 154–155.
- 89 Contra Vigilantium 1. Cf. Tertullian, De anima 3.2.
- 90 Contra Iovinianum 1.4: *Pharisaeorum [...] blasphemias*; contra Helvidium 18; Contra Iohannem 31; contra Pelagianos 2.25.
- 91 Contra Vigilantium 10. For the discussion, see Kahlos, The Importance of Being a Pagan, 51–57.
- 92 Contra Iovinianum 2.6. Rufinus (apologia contra Hieronymum 2.13, CCL 20, 93) defamed Jerome for even exceeding pagan profanity in calling his aristocratic

very name to associate him with the Roman god Jupiter.<sup>93</sup> Vigilantius is connected with the Roman deities Mercurius (greed) and Bacchus (drunkenness), who are said to speak in Vigilantius' person.<sup>94</sup>

Jerome plays the pagan label against John of Jerusalem, whose doctrine he slanders as the composition of pagan fables (*de gentiliū fabulis dogma contextum*).<sup>95</sup> In *Contra Vigilantium* he even associates his rival with both pagan philosophy and heresy, Porphyry of Tyre and Eunomius.<sup>96</sup>

## 11. Outside humanity: demons, monsters and animals

The most extreme form of denigration is the demonization of an opponent. Jerome follows the common idea that heresies were the invention of the devil who, after having failed to destroy the church during the persecution, attempted to tear it down in a more intricate way by setting it into confusion through heresies.

Jerome labels Jovinian's views as the teaching of the Antichrist.<sup>97</sup> Vigilantius is depicted as fighting with an unclean spirit (*immundo spiritu*) against Christ's spirit and utilizing diabolical snares (*diaboli [...] insidiis*). Instead of the standard of the cross, Vigilantius carries the sign of the devil, and demons dwell with him.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, it is the unclean spirit (*spiritus iste immundus*) that drives Vigilantius to write against the martyr cult.<sup>99</sup>

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friend Paula the mother-in-law of God (in Jerome's letter Epistulae 22.20). Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 15; Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 233; Kelly, *Jerome*, 100, 102, 250–251.

93 See n. 82. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 233. In *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* 2, there is an interesting debate between the 'Orthodox' and the Luciferian on whether heretics are Christians. The 'Orthodox', representing Jerome's views, regards them as Christians, while the Luciferian considers them pagans.

94 *Contra Vigilantium* 10.

95 *Contra Iohannem* 19; cf. *Contra Iohannem* 32.

96 *Contra Vigilantium* 10: *in morem gentiliū impiorumque*.

97 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.21: *haec vera est Antichristi praedicatio*.

98 *Contra Vigilantium* 1: *Exortus est subito Vigilantius, seu verius Dormitantius, qui immundo spiritu pugnet contra Christi spiritum*; *contra Vigilantium* 4; 5: *daemones [...] inhabitatores Vigilantii*.

99 *Contra Vigilantium* 10.

In his pretentious exordium of *Contra Vigilantium*, Jerome likens his adversary to the mythical and biblical monsters that the world has generated, centaurs and sirens, owls and pelicans, Leviathan and Behemoth, Cerberus and the Stymphalian birds, the Erymanthian boar and the Nemean lion, the chimaera and multi-headed Hydra, Cacus and the three-bodied Geryon. In addition to these monsters, there has emerged Vigilantius, who fights against the spirit of Christ.<sup>100</sup> Jerome also calls Vigilantius a portent that should be driven back to the end of the world.<sup>101</sup>

As we have discussed above, Jerome uses metaphors of animals, such as horses, goats, doves and hoopoes, to denigrate his opponents as sexually immoderate. The swine of the Epicurean herd served as the emblem for immoderation, gluttony and promiscuity.<sup>102</sup> Animal metaphors also paint an image of an adversary as despicable, harmful, untrustworthy and even perilous creatures. Jerome's rivals are dogs, foxes, different birds of prey, scorpions and snakes.<sup>103</sup> He compares Jovinian and his fol-

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100 *Contra Vigilantium* 1.1: *Multa in orbe monstra generata sunt: centauros et sirenas, ululas et onocrotalos in Isaia [13; 24] legimus. Job [3; 40] Leviathan et Behemoth mystico sermone describit. Cerberum et Stymphalidas, aprumque Erymanthium, et leonem Nemaem, chimaeram atque hydram multorum capitum narrant fabulae potetarum. Cacus describit Vergilius [Aen. 1.8]. Triformem Geryonem Hispaniae prodiderunt. Sola Gallia monstra non habuit, sed viris semper fortibus et eloquentissimis abundavit. Exortus est subito Vigilantius, seu verius Dormitantius, qui immundo spiritu pugnet contra Christi spiritum.* Cf. *Comentarii in Ezechielem* 1 praefatio (CCL 75, 3), in which Rufinus is called *hydra multarum capitum*. For monsters in polemical literature, see Opelt, *Die Polemik in der christlichen lateinischen Literatur von Tertullian bis Augustin*, 235.

101 *Contra Vigilantium* 8: *O portentum in terras ultimas deportandum.* This expression comes from Cicero (in *Verrem* 2.1.(15).40: *o portentum in ultimas terras exportandum*). Opelt 1973, 124 n. 40; Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 186.

102 See n. 51–52.

103 Dogs: *contra Vigilantium* 6; 11; foxes (as the emblem of cunningness): *contra Rufinum* 3.7; scorpions: *contra Rufinum* 3.42; *Contra Iohannem* 8; snakes: *Contra Iovinianum* 1.3; *contra Vigilantium* 15–16; *Contra Iohannem* 3; 25. The snake is used as the symbol of heresy. The snake also refers to the snake in the paradise myth: *contra Rufinum* 3.7. Jerome often reviles Rufinus as a snake (*excetra, serpens*) or a scorpion: Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 146–148, Opelt 1973, 126 n. 55 and Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 234–235. For animal imagery, see Opelt 1973, 23, 118; Kelly, *Jerome*, 168–169 and Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 186.

lowers to birds of prey such as vultures, eagles, hawks and owls, thus reviling Jovinian's defence of eating meat.<sup>104</sup>

## 12. Jerome's polemic in the tradition of invectives and in the context of his life

Jerome's polemical strategies are keenly anchored to the tradition of invectives, both Graeco-Roman and Christian. Harsh slanders were an essential part of the rhetoric used in courts of law, disputes between religious groups as well as in debates between philosophical schools. Jerome's invectives against his theological adversaries follow the conventional expressions and elements of this highly stereotypical polemic that had evolved over the course of centuries.<sup>105</sup> He utilizes conventional rhetorical material: in his polemical works, there are reminiscences and quotations from Cicero's speeches as well as Roman satire (Horace, Persius and Juvenal). Much of Jerome's ammunition was gathered from Christian apologetics and heresiological literature, especially Tertullian.<sup>106</sup>

Jerome often accuses his opponents of issues similar to those that he himself had been blamed for.<sup>107</sup> In many cases, his slanders serve as counter-attack and self-defence, for instance, in the dispute with Rufinus and in the polemic against Vigilantius. Vigilantius had associated Jerome's ascetic circle with heresy and paganism, and Jerome reacted by launching a counter-offensive (see above). In the controversy between Jerome and Rufinus, both sling mutual charges of love for Origen.<sup>108</sup>

104 *Contra Iovinianum* 2.36: *omnes sues et canes, et quia carnem amas, vultures quoque, aquilae, accipitres, et bubones*. A vulture is often used as the emblem of greed: Opelt, *Die Lateinischen Schimpfwörter und verwandte sprachliche Erscheinungen*, 91 n. 8.

105 For the social setting of the polemic in the philosophical schools and religious movements, see Johnson, *The New Testament's anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic*, 429–430.

106 For the influence of Roman and Christian literature, Cicero and Tertullian in particular, Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 9–10, 72, 122, 133, 137; Opelt 1973, 38, 165, Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 12, Duval, *Jérôme ennemi de l'hérésie, non de l'hérétique*, 217–218.

107 Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 36–38 writes of Jerome's readiness to attack faults of which he too was guilty.

108 For the controversy, see Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 137–141, and for the development of Jerome's ambiguous relationship with Origen, see Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 122–150.

Jerome was defamed for spending his time with aristocratic women in Rome (see above), whereas he accused his opponents of lingering with women, insinuating about their promiscuous behaviour.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Jerome implied that Vigilantius' motives for his teaching were self-seeking and greedy indeed (see above), while he himself was blamed for self-seeking interests with the wealthy widows and heiresses in his ascetic circle.<sup>110</sup> In regard to secular literature, accusations of reading, teaching and cherishing it were hurled back and forth between Jerome and Rufinus.<sup>111</sup>

### 13. Jerome's ideal of polemic

In his polemical works and letters Jerome outlines his ideal of proper polemic. The truth must come before rhetorical skill.<sup>112</sup> In *Adversus Iovinianum* he writes that he will proceed by refuting the propositions of his adversary one by one and relying on the evidence of Scripture. In this way Jovinian cannot complain that he has been overcome by eloquence rather than truth.<sup>113</sup> Jerome stresses that rumours do not serve as arguments. He wipes out Rufinus' accusations, commenting that mere after-dinner stories should not be taken as arguments. With a noble disdain, he writes that he could paint Rufinus in the same abusing colours and answer with the same insanity that Rufinus uses, but declines to.<sup>114</sup>

109 See n. 53–54. Jerome (Epistulae 53.7) derides clerics who philosophize on the Scripture with women (*inter mulierculas de sacris litteris philosophantur*); cf. Epistulae 22.28. Jerome (Epistulae 57.13) also connects Rufinus with the looms of women. It is noteworthy that Jerome never blames his patron bishop of Rome Damasus, for loitering with women; Damasus' conduct was reproached by his opponents (*Collectio Avellana*, ep. 1, CSEL 35, 1–4). Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 38, 71, 76–77, 130, 224; Kelly, *Jerome*, 109.

110 During Jerome's stay in Chalcis, rumours were circulated that he had engaged in improper financial gain (Epistulae 17; Kelly, *Jerome*, 54–55). For Jerome's concern for finances, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 193.

111 Rufinus' attack against Jerome's attachment to secular literature in his apology (apologia contra Hieronymum 2.6–9, CCL 20, 87–91); Jerome's self-defence and counter-attacks against Rufinus (contra Rufinum 1.30–31; 3.32). Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 15; Kelly, *Jerome*, 42–43; Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist*, 69–70, 99.

112 Opelt 1973, 39 n. 24 calls this "Objektivität in polemischer Kleidung".

113 *Contra Iovinianum* 1.4: [...] *ne querulus garria, se eloquentia magis quam veritate superatum*. Cf. *contra Helvidium* 12.

114 *Contra Rufinum* 2.20: *huiuscemodi deliramenta dimittas et prandiorum coenarumque fabulas pro argumento non teneas veritatis*. *contra Rufinum* 3.42: *Possem*

For Jerome, the objective of appropriate polemic should not be mere quarrelsomeness and a fervour for victory. He states that the task of a polemicist is to teach rather than win (*magis docere quam vincere*). Furthermore, he criticizes certain clergymen who are too eager to engage in disputes and who quarrel with puffed-up words.<sup>115</sup> A good writer should not be too contentious (*contentiosus*) and confrontational (*pugnax*).<sup>116</sup> However, Jerome sometimes does acknowledge that he is debating in a competitive way. When replying to Jovinian's discussion on the purpose of animals, Jerome admits that he replies in the manner of contending boys (*puerorum more certantium*).<sup>117</sup> In *Dialogus contra Luciferianos* the dispute and arguments between the 'Orthodox' and the Luciferian are compared to the squabbling of little children (*parvulorum inter se certantium ritu*).<sup>118</sup> Jerome was heavily criticized for attacking Jovinian in a too crude and violent manner and had to give an explanation for his polemic in his letters; in his defence Jerome states that the belligerent style is more justified in polemical than in instructional works.<sup>119</sup>

Jerome regards his own rhetorical strategies as proper. He announces that he will not imitate Rufinus and fall into a vile denigration of his opponent. For he who is able to commit filthy things, also speaks filthy words (*ille loquatur spurcitas, qui potest spurca committere*).<sup>120</sup> Jerome justifies his polemic as a defence, for instance, repeatedly in the apology

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*et ego tuis te coloribus pingere et insanire contra insanientem.* Jerome continues to describe Rufinus' false accusations and insinuations. See also contra Rufinum 3.16.

115 Advice in Epistulae 60.10; clergymen in Epistulae 69.9. As Wiesen, St. Jerome as a Satirist, 83 points out, Jerome's own life and writings were filled with violent debates, and yet he censured others for this inclination; also Wiesen, St. Jerome as a Satirist, 173.

116 Contra Luciferianos 11. Cf. contra Helvidium 14: *contentiosum funem non traho*.

117 Contra Iovinianum 2.6. Jerome puts forth an annoying counter-question on the purpose of vipers and scorpions.

118 Contra Luciferianos 11: *Igitur, parvulorum inter se certantium ritu, quicquid dixeris, dicam: affirmabis, affirmabo, negabis, negabo!* Canellis, Jérôme. Débat entre un Luciférien et un orthodoxe, 129 n. 3; Opelt 1973, 19 n. 37.

119 Hieronymus Epistulae 48–50, esp. 49.2; 49.13: *in altero pugnandum, in altero docendum est.* Rufinus (apologia contra Hieronymum 2.42) also refers to the great indignation aroused by Jerome's tractate against Jovinian. Kelly, Jerome, 187; Vuolanto 56–57; Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity, 244–259; Clausi, Bibbia e polemica negli scritti controversiali di Gerolamo, 41–42; Duval, L'affaire Jovinien, 247–266.

120 Contra Rufinum 3.1.



against Rufinus.<sup>121</sup> He writes that he does not want to appear as if he has started the battle; he is only healing his own wound. The reader must decide who threw the first blow. Jerome compares himself with an animal that has horns, that is, which is able to defend itself.<sup>122</sup> He nonetheless is aware that his pamphlet war with Rufinus appears far from sublime in the eyes of their listeners: two old men fighting with each other over heretics.<sup>123</sup>

Jerome's motives are pure and justified while his opponent attacks due to malevolence or self-interest.<sup>124</sup> He assures the reader that he does not write polemic for amusement, but that he must correct injustice.<sup>125</sup> Jerome states several times that he cannot remain silent. Either the need for self-defence or the duty to correct errors compels him to break his silence. The theme of silence also appears in other ecclesiastical writers' polemical works: for example, Cyril of Alexandria writes that he has kept silence in the past, but now that the high point of evil has been reached, it is urgent to speak openly.<sup>126</sup>

121 *Contra Rufinum* passim; e.g., 1.21; 1.22; 2.1; 2.23; 2.24; 2.35; 3.2; 3.3. For Jerome's defensive technique, see Opelt 1973, 86, 95, 106, 116, 128–129, 140.

122 *Contra Rufinum* 1.5: *ne prior laesisse videar, qui et vulneratus nequaquam contra persecutorem tela direxi: sed meo tantum vulnere admovi manum*; 1.31: *cornutam bestiam petis*. This is reminiscent of Horace (*Satirae* 1.4.34). Opelt 1973, 163.

123 *Contra Rufinum* 3.9: *Quae enim est audientium aedificatio, duos senes inter se propter haereticos digladiari*. Jerome assures the reader that he fights reluctantly. If Rufinus were to cease accusing him, Jerome would cease defending himself.

124 E.g. in *Contra Iohannem* 1 Jerome assures the reader that he writes, not due to enmity or a desire for glory, but because of Pammachius' request and the zeal of faith. The adversary's malevolence, *invidia*, appears in *contra Rufinum* 2.14; greed: *contra Rufinum* 3.4; *contra Vigilantium* 13.

125 *Contra Vigilantium* 1: *Hac dolentis magis effudi animo quam ridentis, dum me cohibere non possum, et iniuriam apostolorum ac martyrum surda nequeo aure transire*; also *contra Vigilantium* 3.

126 *Contra Iohannem* 1; *contra Helvidium* 1; *contra Rufinum* 1.4: *quod hucusque silentium modestiae fuerit, non malae conscientiae*; also 3.2; 3.3; 3.9: *et nisi tu provocares, semper taciturnum fuisse*. Cf. *Cyrilli epistulae* 11.1 (=ACO 1.1.5 p. 10). For the silence, see also Duval, Jérôme ennemi de l'hérésie, non de l'hérétique, 221.

## 14. Concluding remarks

Jerome's own arguments in his polemical works were not particularly elaborate or profound; his theology was closely interwoven with his ascetic aspirations and personal ambitions.<sup>127</sup> Against this background, it is understandable that vilification and personal attacks played such a significant part in his attacks. In Jerome's writing, the classical and Christian tradition of invectives and his perfervid temper became a grave combination. In the controversies concerning the theological views of Helvidius, Jovinian and Vigilantius, for instance, the outcome – the condemnation of their opinions – resulted from different factors, such as ecclesiastical power struggles and the contest for spiritual leadership. Nonetheless, Jerome's polemic and the construction of an opponent's image had an obvious impact in these ecclesiastical disputes.

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127 For evaluations of Jerome's theology in his polemical works, see, e.g., Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 121–122, 157 and Kelly, *Jerome*, 186. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, 121, even argues that in the Origenist controversy against Rufinus, Jerome's primary concern was to "save his own skin" against charges of Origenism. Similarly, according to Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*, 244, in the Jovinianist controversy, Jerome's main purpose was to escape the charge of heresy.

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