



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

I·S·H·R

International Society For the History of Rhetoric  
Retorica • Rhétorique • Rhetorik • Rhetoric • Retórica

---

Satiric Vulgarity in Guibert de Nogent's *Gesta Dei per Francos*

Author(s): Robert Levine

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 261-273

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [International Society for the History of Rhetoric](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rh.1989.7.3.261>

Accessed: 10/01/2013 11:09

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press and International Society for the History of Rhetoric are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

ROBERT LEVINE

## Satiric Vulgarity in Guibert de Nogent's *Gesta Dei per Francos*

**A**ttempts to characterize Guibert de Nogent (1053–1121) generally focus upon his *Autobiography*, not on his history of the First Crusade. What scholarly attention the *Gesta Dei per Francos* has received is devoted to the theological problems Guibert set about solving in it.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the same personality that dominates the autobiographical text penetrates the historical text. As cantankerous as Carlyle, Guibert reveals in the *Gesta* the same qualities that Jonathan Kantor detected elsewhere:

The tone of the memoirs is consistently condemning and not confiding; they were written not by one searching for the true faith but by one determined to condemn the faithless.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See M.D. Coupe, "The personality of Guibert de Nogent reconsidered," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (Dec. 1983): 317–329 for a summary and judgment of the work of J. Kantor, Benton, and others. See also Jacques Charaud, "La conception de l'histoire de Guibert de Nogent," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 8 (1965): 381–395, and Klaus Schreiner, "Discrimen veri ac falsi," *Archive für Kulturgeschichte* 48 (1966): 1–51. Both Charaud and Schreiner are concerned to demonstrate the degree to which Guibert's vision of history is ruled by theology, and tropology in particular; both articles can be read as respectful corrections of Bernard Monod, "De la méthode historique chez Guibert de Nogent," *Revue historique* 84 (1904): 51–70. Georg Misch also makes an attempt to characterize Guibert, in *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, vol. 3, part two, first half (Frankfurt, 1959): 108–162.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal of Medieval History* 2 (1976): 299 (of 281–303).

However, Kantor goes on to argue, on the basis of a comparison with one other twelfth-century historian, that Guibert's writings are "the product of a cloister mentality" (300), thereby missing an essential literary fact about Guibert: like many others before him, including Jerome and Liudprand of Cremona, he was an *anima naturaliter satirica*. Like Liudprand, he found an opportunity to vent his spleen in the course of composing an historical work.

The anger they express, however, is often taken as a symptom of their own instability. In a thirteenth-century poem attributed to Walter Map, the poet complains that the flatterer appears to be calm and judicious, while the man who speaks the truth is sad, satiric, and strange (*fanaticus* in Classical Latin might mean "inspired" or "insane").

Qui palpo fuerit, ille pacificus,  
illeque dicitur esse probaticus;  
qui vera loquitur est melancholicus,  
immo satiricus, immo fanaticus.<sup>3</sup>

The flatterer is said to be calm and judicious, while he who speaks the truth is melancholic, satiric, even mad.

The truth-teller, then, *qui vera loquitur*, seems abnormal to others; therefore the truly perceptive person will realize that qualities that appear to be socially negative are actually signs of accuracy and reliability.

Modern readers also have had difficulty with the nature of satire, sometimes attributing to individual, personal sensibility what was part of a rhetorical posture shared by many writers. When John Benton says of Guibert, "he exhibits some of the tortures of a distressed mind,"<sup>4</sup> he may be misconstruing the rules of the "game of truth."<sup>5</sup> Guibert's posture and tone may have been intensely personal, yet they are also the result of his participation in a long and effective rhetorical tradition.

<sup>3</sup>Ll. 97–100 of "De Palpone et Assentore," in *The Latin poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. Thomas Wright (London 1841). The passage may be distantly related to Terence, *Andria* 68, *Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit*, which Isidore of Seville uses as his example of the third kind of enthymeme, the *sententiale* (*Etymologies*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911, 2.9.11).

<sup>4</sup>*Self and Society in Medieval France* (New York, 1970) 32.

<sup>5</sup>J.M.A. Beer's phrase, in *Narrative Conventions of Truth in the Middle Ages* (Geneva, 1981), 22 *et alibi*.

Vituperation provides the dominant tone in the one work of Guibert's which gets any attention in standard histories of rhetoric, the *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat*. Characteristically, he associates the wrong kind of speech with the lower body, asserting that men whose motives for speaking are generated by pride, disdain, and envy are literal ventriloquists:

hoc isti ne sermocinatores vocentur, quod infame genus hominum esse solet, quia pro suo ventre loquuntur, unde a Gregorio Naziano *ventriloqui appellantur*, ex typo nimio dedignantur.<sup>6</sup>

These men cannot be called speakers, because they belong to that group of men who speak for their own bellies, for which reason they are called "ventriloquists" by Gregory of Nazianus.

The techniques of debasement reappear when Guibert finds ample room for exercising his condemnatory impulses in reworking accounts of the First Crusade. In the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, whose title is itself an attempt to correct what Guibert argued was Fulcher's misleading version of events (the deeds were done *through* not *by* the French), Guibert attacks several groups: those who believe in relics<sup>7</sup> other than those which he himself believes to be authentic; those who choose a style more elaborate or less elaborate than the one that he himself uses; aristocrats who belong to factions other than his own; Jews, heretics, and Arabs.

Some of the strategies Guibert invokes to mount his attacks resemble those of classical diatribe, *psogos*, or invective, although his text contains no convincing evidence of Guibert's familiarity with specific prescriptions by Cicero, Quintilian, or the author of the *Ad Herrenium*. Manuscripts of standard classical handbooks did circulate and were transcribed during the Middle Ages. In the ninth century, Lupus of Ferrières transcribed a copy of Cicero's *De oratore*. Copies of the same work existed at various French monasteries during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, at Saint-Gildas near Bourges in the eleventh century, and at Cluny by the middle of the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> However, whether Guibert pro-

<sup>6</sup>Migne PL 156.22.

<sup>7</sup>See Guibert's *De pignoribus sanctorum* (Migne PL 156.607–684) for an extended attack on those who believe in the wrong relics.

<sup>8</sup>L.D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford, 1983), 102–109.

duced invective and diatribe spontaneously out of an *anima naturaliter satirica*, or found models for his invective and diatribe in specific rhetorical texts, or inferred them from reading poets and historians is a question that cannot be answered authoritatively on the basis of research done so far.

Nevertheless, John Ward implies that Guibert, in the letter to Lysiard that forms part of the prefatory material for the *Gesta*, makes use of patterns described and prescribed by Cicero and his epigones.<sup>9</sup> Ward, however, devotes no attention to the classical models for Guibert's diatribe and invective.

Conventionally, classical invective is an inversion of classical panegyric. As codified and practiced by the writers of the Second Sophistic,<sup>10</sup> panegyric consisted of six topics:

1. Prologue (with no particular assigned material)
2. Genos, or race and genealogy
3. Nurture and education
4. Deeds
5. Comparisons
6. Epilogue. Prayer for future welfare.<sup>11</sup>

To attack someone, then, the speaker might use the same categories, reversing the values. As Cicero pointed out, in a passage that also suggests a link between what is serious and what is comic, praise and blame have different subject matters, but they share the same method:

---

<sup>9</sup>*Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, ed. Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo, 1985), 138–139. On the basis of the same assumption, Ward demonstrates the presence of traditional rhetorical patterns in Baudry of Bourgeuil as well.

<sup>10</sup>Cicero's description of panegyric covers most of the same ground, without enumerating the topics; Cicero, *De oratore* 2.84.340 ff., Quintilian 3.7.18, and see 3.7 on *laus et vituperatio*. In his study of Claudian, Alan Cameron has pointed out that "in theory invective was simply an inversion of panegyric." Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 254. Harry L. Levy shows some of the ways in which Claudian's *In Rufinum* follows the prescriptions for panegyric and vituperation, in "Claudian's *In Rufinum* and the Rhetorical *Psogos*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, off, 77 (1946): 57–65. For the tendency to confuse praise and blame in some satiric texts see Robert Levine, "Why praise Jews; History and Satire in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (1986): 291–296.

<sup>11</sup>The list is taken from C.S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetics* (Gloucester, 1959), 60 ff., an economic paraphrase of Quintilian 3.7.

Dixi enim dudum, materiam aliam esse joci, aliam severitatis; gravium autem et iocorum unam essem rationem . . . eisdem verbis et laudare frugi servum possumus, et, se est nequam, jocari.

For I said before that, though the fields of jesting and austerity lie wide apart, yet the methods of seriousness and jesting are identical . . . we can, in identical terms, praise a careful servant, and make fun of one who is good-for-nothing.<sup>12</sup>

The sixth topic of panegyric, the prayer for the future welfare of one's subject, in *psogos* often becomes an excuse for the writer to compose a hideous death-scene, in the course of which he may insult the object of his vituperation by appealing to other topics as well. Perhaps the best-known of these scenes occurs in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, where the emperor Claudius at his death propels himself to heaven by his own flatulence.<sup>13</sup> After providing a mixture of verse and prose, Greek and Latin, as a preamble, Seneca describes the moment of death:

Ultima vox eius haec inter homines audita est, cum maiorem sonitum emisisset illa parte, qua facilius loquebatur: "vae mihi, puto, concacavi me." Quod an fecerit, nescio; omnia certe concacavit.

The last words he was heard to speak in this world were these. When he had made a great noise with that part of him which talked easiest, he cried out, "Oh dear, oh dear! I think I have made a mess of myself." Whether he did or no, I cannot say, but certain it is he always did make a mess of everything.<sup>14</sup>

Claudian, at the end of the fourth century, offers an example of another such exercise, in an attack on one of Eutropius' allies, a former weaver named Leo, for whom he provides an absurd death on the battlefield. After having rhetorically demolished Hosius, another ally of Eutropius, Claudian calls upon topic five, comparisons, to help debase the death of Leo. Not like the lion his name proclaims, but like a deer, Leo meets his death, while his horse sweats beneath his massive weight:

<sup>12</sup>*De oratore* 2.65.262–264 and 2.60.247–249.

<sup>13</sup>That Guibert had access to the work cannot be demonstrated. Reynolds, 361–362, reports that Hucbald (840–930) owned a copy of the *Apocolocyntosis*, and that various other manuscripts of the work existed throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>14</sup>*Petronius*, translated by Michael Heseltine (London, 1913), 380–381. In this example as well as in the later ones, the strategies of classical *psogos* clearly resemble the techniques of debasement that characterize "grotesque realism," as described, explored (and severely oversimplified in the area of medieval literature) by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, 1968).

Ipse Leo dama cervoque fugacior ibat,  
Sudanti tremebundus equo; qui pondere postquam  
Decidit implicitus limo, cunctantia pronus  
Per vada reptabat.

Leo himself, swifter than deer or antelope, fled  
trembling on his foam-flecked horse, and it  
falling under his weight, Leo sand in the mire and  
on all fours fought his way through the clinging  
slime.<sup>15</sup>

Stuck in the mud, he groans like a pig; Claudian now recalls  
Hosius' abilities as a cook, composing a simile which allows him,  
by association, to spit and roast his opponent:

caeno subnixa tenaci  
mergitur, et pingui suspirat corpore moles,  
More suis, dapibus quae jam devota futuris  
Turpe gemit, quotiens Hosius mucrone corusco  
Armat, cingitque sinus; secumque volutat  
Quas figat verubus partes, quae frustra calenti  
Mandet aquae, quantoque cutem distendat echino. (2.444–459)

Held up at first by the thick mud, his fat body  
gradually settles down panting like a common pig,  
which destined to grace the coming feast, squeals  
when Hosius arms him with flashing knife, and  
gathers up his garments, pondering the while what  
portions he will transfix with spits, which pieces  
of the flesh he will boil and how much sea-urchin  
stuffing will be needed to fill the empty skin.

As part of his "technique of debasement," then, Claudian applies  
to the would-be hero Leo what Curtius has called "kitchen imag-  
ery,"<sup>16</sup> without, however, providing the parody of divine *afflatus* to  
be found in Seneca's representation of the death of Claudius.

In his description of the death of Jovinian, and the transmis-  
sion of his ideas to Vigilantius, Saint Jerome combines the image of  
pigs with the parody of divine *afflatus*, providing a Christian varia-  
tion for these motifs:

<sup>15</sup>Claudian 2.440–43, (ed. and trans. Maurice Platnauer [London, 1956]).

<sup>16</sup>E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953),  
431–435.

Hic Romanae Ecclesiae auctoritate damnatus, inter  
Phasides aves et carnes suillas non tam emisit  
spiritum, quam eructavit.

Jovinianus, condemned by the authority of the  
church, amidst pheasants and swine's flesh,  
breathed out, or rather belched out his  
spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere in the *Adversus Jovinianum*, in the course of attacking his  
opponent as the modern Epicurus, Jerome again associates him  
with pigs:

Quoscumque formosos, quoscumque calamistratos, quos crine  
composito, quos rubentibus buccis videro, de tuo armento sunt,  
imo inter tuos sues grunniunt.

If ever I see a fine fellow, or a man who is no stranger to the  
curling-irons, with his hair nicely done and his cheeks all aglow, he  
belongs to your herd, or rather grunts in concert with your pigs.<sup>18</sup>

In this passage Jerome is probably recalling Horace's playfully self-  
deprecating description of himself as *Epicuri de grege porcum* (*Ep.*  
1.4.16), although he has very clearly changed the tone. A few lines  
later, Jerome reinforces the connection with swine:

Et pro magna sapientia deputas, si plures porci  
post te currant, quos gehennae succidiae nutrias?

And do you regard it as a mark of great wisdom if  
you have a following of many pigs, whom you are  
feeding to make pork for hell?

The association of pigs, Epicurus, and heretics proved particu-  
larly useful in Christian polemics against Mahomet, who inspired a  
wide range of invective. Byzantine writers provided the Prophet  
with epilepsy; Bartholomew of Edessa assured his readers that  
Mahomet had been dragged to his death by a drunken camel,  
while others imagined him eaten by dogs.<sup>19</sup> Embricho of Mainz,

<sup>17</sup>PL XXIII.355., Trans. W.H. Fremantle, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 6 (Lon-  
don, 1892).

<sup>18</sup>PL XXII.349. Fremantle, p. 414.

<sup>19</sup>See A. d'Ancona, *La Leggenda di Maometto in Occidente*, 199–281; Embricho of  
Mainz, *La vie de Mahomet*, ed. Guy Cambier, 1962, 30–31. For a discussion of later  
versions of this scene, with particular emphasis on the version offered by Matthew  
Paris, see Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris* (Berkeley: Univ. of California  
Press, 1987), 99–101.



however, perhaps thirty years before the First Crusade, offers a version of the death of Mahomet that combines epilepsy, sexual excess, and pigs. In Embricho's elegiacs, Mahomet falls into an epileptic fit, at which point a band of pigs finds him and eats him:

Accurrere sues—digna repente lues!—  
Qui rapidus sic grex quasi spernens quod foret his rex,  
Totus in hunc properat et miserum lacerat.

Pigs fell upon him, a worthy punishment; the band of pigs, as though spurning him as their king, all rushed upon him and tore the wretch apart.<sup>20</sup>

Although his depiction of the death of Mahomet (a scene that allows him simultaneously to attack two of his favorite foes: Semitic foreigners and heretics), is more abbreviated than Embrichon's, Guibert adds the parody of divine *afflatus*. Having spent much of the early part of the *Gesta Dei per Francos* attacking heretics, towards the end of the first book he turns to the Arabs, whom he portrays as sexual maniacs. According to Guibert, they force the women whom they capture to sing while their mothers are being raped, then force the women to exchange roles. He takes the apparently fastidious position that such activity is partially excusable, since heterosexual activity is "natural," but when the Arabs rape men, even a bishop, they have gone too far.<sup>21</sup>

His abhorrence of the sexual excesses of Arabs is so great that it allows him the license of interrupting the chronological narration of events to compose a cadenza on the life of Mahomet.<sup>22</sup> After devoting some attention to the theological errors for which the prophet was responsible, Guibert launches into a narrative that emphasizes the Prophet's low birth (topic two) and the sexual license (topic four: "deeds") engaged in and encouraged by Mahomet. In the case of the prophet himself, the result, according to Guibert, was an excessive number of children, and epilepsy. Having passed out during one of his seizures, Mahomet is eaten by pigs. Guibert adds a detail to Embricho's account: the prophet's heels are all that remains of him:

---

<sup>20</sup>Cambier, 88. The poem is also printed by Migne, PL 171, attributed to Hildebert.

<sup>21</sup>Embricho also goes to great lengths in his denunciation of Arabic perverse sexuality (Cambier, 78–79).

<sup>22</sup>Guibert de Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, RHC.HO IV, p. 130.

Quum subitaneo ictu epylenseos saepe corrueret,  
 quo eum diximus superius laborare, accidit semel,  
 dum solus obambulat, ut morbo elisus eodem  
 caderet; et inventus, dum ipsa passione torquetur,  
 a porcis in tantum discerpitur, ut nullae ejus  
 praeter talos reliquiae invenirentur.

Since he often fell into a sudden epileptic fit,  
 it happened once, while he was walking alone, that  
 he suddenly fell in a fit; while he was writhing  
 in this agony, he was devoured by pigs, so that  
 nothing could be found of him except his heels.

Thus the heretic, having given himself up to bestial appetite, is “justly” devoured by the beasts most commonly associated with excessive physical appetite, as well as the beasts whom Muslims are forbidden to eat.<sup>23</sup>

The association of food, sex, and the misuse of language is one that Guibert also uses in the *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat*:

Nam sicut victualia sobrie sumpta ad corporis  
 nutrimentum in corpore permanent, immoderate vero  
 vorata in detrimentum vergunt, et vomitum  
 provocant; et qui semine legitimo et parce  
 modesteque edito conjugi miscetur, prolem creat,  
 qui vero semine fluit, nihil utile efficit, sed  
 carnem foedat: ita qui nimie verbum profert, et  
 id quod auditorum cordibus insitum erat, et  
 proficere poterat, aufert.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>In Embricho’s text, an Arab priest draws an explicit moral also:

Hoc ut monstraret et aperte significaret,  
 Ipse pati voluit nosque per hoc monuit  
 Quam fragiles simus. Sed quamvis carne perimus,  
 Post mortem reliqua spes tamen est aliqua,  
 Fit quia nostrarum mors ipsa salus animarum,  
 Et quando morimur, tunc Mahumet sequimur (p. 91)

This shows and clearly demonstrates that his suffering was designed to tell us how weak we are. But although we may perish in the flesh, after death some hope remains that our death may be the salvation of our souls, and when we die, we may follow Mahomet.

<sup>24</sup>Migne, PL 156.25.

For food moderately taken to feed the body remains in the body, but devoured immoderately is detrimental and provokes vomiting; he who carefully and restrainedly copulates may create a child, but he who is lavish with his seed does nothing useful, merely soiling the flesh. Thus the man who offers too many words vitiates the good that he might do for the hearts of his listeners.

The incident also gives Guibert a chance to compose a routine against one of his favorite objects for invective: false relics. To begin the routine, Guibert meditates on the significance of the narrative he has just given, providing an exegesis in the course of which he recalls the fate of Epicurus, offers the Stoics as types of true Christians, and asserts the precise fitness of the death of Mahomet:

Ecce legifer optimus, dum Epicureum, quem veri Stoici, Christi scilicet cultores, occiderant, porcum resuscitare molitur, immo prorsus resuscitat, porcus ipse porcis devorandus exponitur: ut obscoenitatis magisterium obscoenissimo, uti convenit, fine concludat. Talos jure reliquit, quia perfidiae ac turpitudinis vestigia deceptis miserabiliter animabus infixit.

While the true Stoics, that is, the worshipers of Christ, killed Epicurus, lo, the greatest law-giver [Guibert's antiphrasis] tried to revive the pig, but the pig itself lay exposed to be eaten by pigs, so that the master of filth appropriately died a filthy death. He left his heels fittingly, since he had wretchedly fixed the traces of false belief and foulness in deceived souls.<sup>25</sup>

Guibert now shifts his tone, composing a comic routine that oscillates between prose and verse, and that deliberately and self-consciously goes "too far."

First he calls upon two parts of an Horatian ode to assist in interpreting the death of Mahomet:

Cujus talorum titulo exegimus tetrasticum juxta Poetam:  
Aere perennius,  
Regalique situ pyramidum altius: (3.30.1,2)

<sup>25</sup>Guibert may have the image of Mahomet grinding his heels into their souls.

ut vir egregius, omni porco felicior, cum poeta  
eodem dicere valeat:

Non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei  
Vitabit Libitinam. (3.30.6–7)

We shall find an explanation for the heels in four lines of the poet. So that the fine man, happier than any pig, might say with the poet: "I shall not die entirely, a great part of me shall avoid Hell."

Thus Guibert converts a line Horace wrote in praise of his own poetry into invective against Mahomet.

He proceeds to offer an elegaic quatrain of his own to magnify the absurd, abhorrent qualities of the death he has just described:

Manditur ore suum, qui porcum vixerat, hujus  
Membra beata cluunt, podice fusa suum.  
Quum talos ori, tum quod sus fudit odori,  
Digno qui celebrat cultor honore ferat.

He who has lived by the pig is chewed to death by the pig and the limbs which were called blessed have become pigs' excrement. May those who wish to honor him carry to their mouths his heels, which the pig has poured forth in stench.

Charaud's response to the excesses of this routine shows a proper appreciation of Guibert's deliberate violation of decorum:

Et le moine s'en donne à coeur joie lorsqu'il livre à la postérité un quatrain d'horreur et de grossièreté où l'analogie entre le porc et le prophète Mahomet est savamment établie.<sup>26</sup>

Guibert, however, is still not finished with debasing his opponent, but instead steps up the use of banquet imagery, bringing in the Manicheans, and speculating on the number of angels created by the process of eating Mahomet:

Quod si Manichaeorum sunt vera repurgia sectae, ut  
in omni quod comeditur pars quaedam maneat  
commaculata Dei, et dentium comminatione, et  
stomachi concoctione pars ipsa Dei purgetur, et  
purgata jam in angelos convertitur, qui ructibus  
et ventositate extra nos prodire dicantur: sues de  
hujus carnibus pastas quot credimus angelos  
effecisse et magnis hinc inde flatibus emisisse?

---

<sup>26</sup>Guibert, 385.

What if there is some truth in what the Manicheans say about purification, that in every food something of God is present and that part of God is purified by chewing and digesting, and the purified part is turned into angels, who are said to depart from us in belching and flatulence: how many angels may we believe were produced by the flesh eaten by these pigs and by the great farts they let go?

Having indulged his penchant for grotesque comedy, Guibert now tries to re-establish the illusion that he is an objective historian by offering a seemingly fair assessment of the contributions of Mahomet:

Sed omissis jocularibus quae pro sequacium derisione dicuntur, hoc est insinuandum: quod non eum Deum, ut aliqui aestimant, opinantur; sed hominem justum eundemque patronum, per quem leges divinae tradantur.

But, laying aside the comic remarks intended to mock his followers, my point is that they did not think that he was God, but a just man and leader, through whom divine laws might be transmitted.

Cicero offers a model, though less extravagant, yet still porcine, for this kind of rhetorical behavior, in the *In verrem*. After associating his opponent with pigs ("pork gravy," anticipating the modern "pork barrel"), he apologizes for the vulgar comic relief:

Hinc illi homines erant qui etiam ridiculi inveniebantur ex dolore; quorum alii, id quod saepe audistis, negebant mirandum esse ius tam nequam esse verrinum: alii etiam frigidiores erant, sed quia stomachabantur ridiculi videbantur esse, cum Sacerdotem execrabantur qui verrem tam nequam reliquisset. Quae ego non commemorare (neque enim perfacete dicta neque porro hac severitate digna sunt) nisi vos illud vellem recordari, istius nequitiam et iniquitatem tum in ore vulgi atque in communibus proverbiiis esse versatam.

Hence those people whose indignation went so far as to make them humorists: some of these made the remark you have often heard repeated, that *ius verrinum* was of course poor stuff: others were

still sillier, only that their irritation passed them off as good jesters, when they cursed Sacerdos for leaving such a miserable hog behind him. I should not recall these jokes, which are not particularly witty, nor, moreover, in keeping with the serious dignity of this Court, were it not that I would have you remember how Verres' offences against morality and justice became at the time the subject of common talk and popular catchwords.<sup>27</sup>

Cicero, then, provides one possible model for indulging in and apologizing for bad taste; having associated his opponent with pigs, he dissociates himself from the act.<sup>28</sup>

Thus Guibert, like Cicero in his attack on Verres, indulges in, and then distances himself from a joke told in deliberately bad taste. His attack on Mahomet concludes with an exercise in the sixth topic of *psogos*, with some help from at least two other topics. In addition, in the cause of Christian polemic, he invokes the techniques of classical rhetorical debasement, with particular emphasis on "kitchen imagery," drawing some of his material from a tradition represented most vividly by Seneca's portrayal of Claudius' flatulent apotheosis, and by Jerome's attack on Jovinian.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Cicero, *The Second Speech Against Verres*, ed. and trans. L.H.G. Greenwood (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1928) 1.46.121.

<sup>28</sup>For a study of Cicero's sense of humor, useful in spite of its Bergsonian bias, see Auguste Haury, *L'Ironie et l'humour chez Cicéron* (Leiden, 1955).

<sup>29</sup>For later uses of flatulence as a debasement of speech, see Dante's devil, who *avea del cul fatto trombetta* (*Inferno* 21.39), and the conclusion of Chaucer's Summoner's Tale.